



BEFORE Suez, under the weight of days, glides imperceptibly from a crisis back into a Canal, an examination of the legal aspects of the whole business, recently reviewed in a Chatham House publication, may reward a glance. What chiefly seems to emerge is that no one knows whether the Canal Company was French or Egyptian, whether President Nasser confiscated it or expropriated it, who has a right to freeze whose assets, what the distinction is between an armistice agreement and the exercise of belligerent rights, whether Egypt can properly deny passage to Israeli ships (whether, in fact, Egypt is correct in assuming the two countries still at war), how the Hague Regulations apply—neither country being a party to them—what is meant by Article 24(1) of the United Nations Charter, whether the straits of Tiran are in Egyptian territorial waters, how far justified was Egypt's action in filling the waterway with scuttled ships, why Anglo-French forces thought they were entitled to land at Port Said, and what would be the effect if the whole thing were studied in the light of the Constantinople Convention. True, it seems a bit late to go into all this with reference to the canal, but the Channel Tunnel lawyers might care to comment.

#### Re-write All Those Signs

STUDENTS of racial problems have not taken too seriously the claim of Professor



Jacques Benoit, who, after successes with a substance that changes the colour of ducks, says that the process can be extended to humans. But a few of the more frivolous couldn't resist speculation

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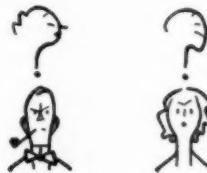
on what would happen if some of the stuff got into Mr. Strydom's soup.

#### Time for Prayers

THERE is a Parliamentary move, led by Mr. John Dugdale, M.P., to ban compulsory church parades in the Navy. Some admirals feel that it could hardly have come at a worse time.

#### Interplay of Ideas

ENGINEERS, Sir Edward Boyle told a feminine audience the other day, do not spend their time walking around in



dirty overalls, but "thinking, talking and planning activities which we would find no difficulty in associating with women." This naturally made a valuable impact on an audience which spends its time thinking, talking and planning activities which we would find no difficulty in associating with men.

#### Business With Pleasure

AMERICAN tourists who amusingly called the Duke of Bedford "Dook" and paid through the nose for a bison lunch which most of them left uneaten enabled British journalists, one hand tied behind their backs and the other probing a dictionary of American slang, to get off hundreds of entertaining words about that droll figure, the wealthy, breathless and dotingly impressionable guest from across the Atlantic. How we roared to read that the Duke flinched when a Mrs. Roberts exclaimed "You're a real American boy," or that a Mr. Fisher was naïve enough to liken Woburn Abbey to "my folks' place in Oyster Bay, Long

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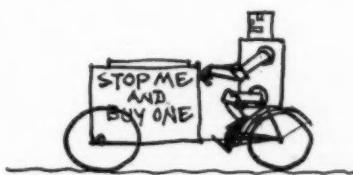
Island." Awfully funny. However, the joke is on the old side now. Some may feel that if it is still impossible to suppress our mirth, we might at least have the grace to hide it behind our fistfuls of dollar bills.

#### Old Spanish Customs and Excise

WHEN B.E.A. inaugurated their new service between London and Valencia last week the only complaint was that it took passengers an hour and a half to get through passport formalities on arrival in Spain. Actually, this was deliberate courtesy by the Spanish authorities, giving wits in the party a chance to crack that one about staying mainly in the 'plane.

#### Buy Me or Else

ONE Press commentator on the electronic automata exhibited at Olympia pointed out that prodigious efforts of salesmanship would be necessary if they were to find favour with



potential purchasers. Manufacturers were not perturbed. A few more improvements and they will be able to sit back while the machines sell themselves.

#### Traitor in the Camp

ADVERTISING men who conferred at Brighton recently were rebuked for strolling in the sunshine instead of sitting inside and listening to advertising men talking about advertising. Obviously this sort of thing makes a mockery of a conference, and it is thought that Lord Luke, president of the Advertising Association, will next

year urge that the venue be shifted to Oldham, say, or Warrington—though of course he'll be up against Brighton publicity department, advertising itself as the sunniest conference resort.

### Mark of the Accolade

A YEAR ago plain Len Hutton wrote from Worcester, for the *Evening News*: "The 1956 Australian tour of England started at exactly 11.31 a.m. here to-day when Lindwall bowled to England's hopeful Don Kenyon . . ." Last week, same place, same paper, similar occasion, Sir Leonard Hutton wrote that Worcester was a cricket-lover's dream of summer; that winter was suddenly at an end . . . "if the sun shines it dapples and glitters over the Severn, and as the swans fly upstream their coats shine milk white in its rays . . ."

### Take That

PUBLIC feeling will make itself felt in the end, however blandly the State may bungle. Birmingham traders report successes in their campaign to boycott Nasser onions.

### Position Filled

MISGIVINGS about the wisdom of appointing Mr. Ernest Marples as Postmaster-General have now been allayed. His start was certainly eccentric with wild talk about improved services



and more advanced techniques, and frenzied publicity-chasing in sorting-offices and on delivery rounds, but his recent announcement in the House that Post Office workers are to be paid more for shorter hours, and the public to pay more for reduced service, show that he is now thoroughly settled in.

### Flash-Bulb Firms in Protest Bid

PROPOSALS that the Queen should live part of the year in Commonwealth

countries have found little favour with the Palace authorities. Treasury officials are equally unenthusiastic, fearing that the national economy might not be able to cope with the thousands of Press photographers thrown on public assistance.

### Smile or I Fire

BEACH-, pier- and pleasure-garden-goers around our coasts, though familiar with municipal disciplines of the "No Dogs," "No Perambulators," "No Readmission" and "No Parking" kind, were nevertheless somewhat alarmed by the news that Gosport Council, planning a campaign to become a holiday resort, announced that they were sending a Please Help Us deputation to the War Office. However, it turned out to be nothing more than a shot at getting the Army to disgorge some requisitioned land.

### Finer Hour

WHILE diplomatic talks at Bonn Went indefatigably on

The Press was filled with stirring Shots from a film about Dunkirk. This shows the public mind at work, Subconsciously averring Old blood and sweat and tears to be Improvements on the bonhomie, The everlasting bonhomie Of diplomats conferring.

## Niminy—Piminy

(After the Greek of Lord H\*\*lsh\*m)

I WENT to the Ministry of Education  
And my feet trod in the Holy Place  
And there were corns on all my toes.  
I climbed up to the place of affliction  
And I saw the work of patient old men  
And frankly I did not think very much of it.

I went again to the Ministry of Education  
And I had wind in the place where no wind should be  
It was very dark and there was much rain  
(Because the lights had fused and the roof was leaking)  
And my heart said "This is the place of affliction"  
And my wind said things that cannot be put into words.

I went a third time to the Ministry of Education  
And there was heartburn in my stomach  
And I cried aloud with the pain of it,  
It was still dark and raining harder than ever.  
I went up to the Holy of Holies  
But I faltered and a hand grasped my arm  
In my agony I cried out "Who is that?"

And a voice replied "Have no fear, it is I, the Lord, the Minister,"

And I said unto him "Be a good chap, will you, and turn on the light."

And suddenly a great light shone forth  
And in that light I saw the Lord, the Minister,  
His head swathed in bandages and tears on his cheekbones  
And I grasped his arm and said unto him "What ails you, old fellow?"

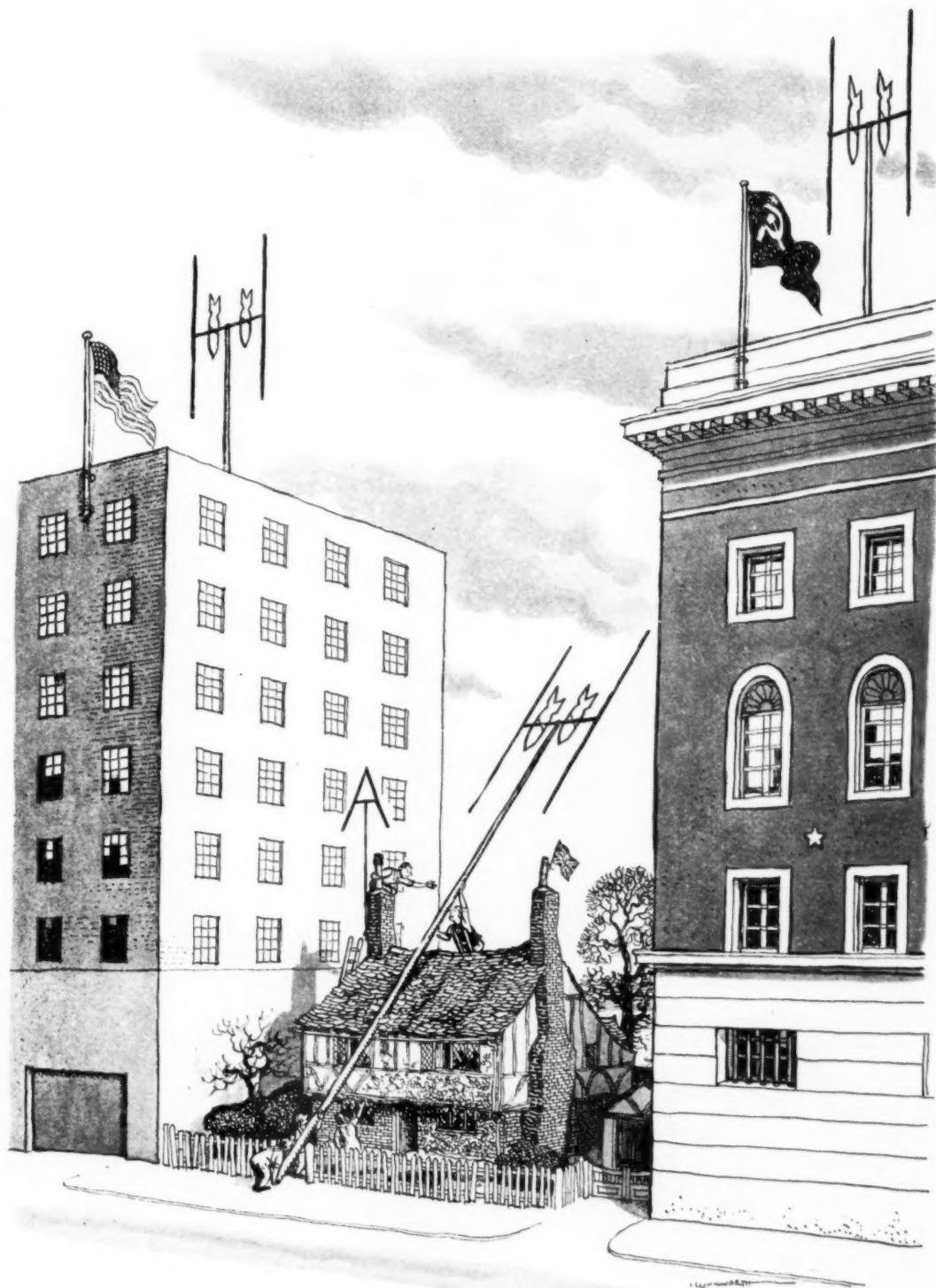
And he said unto me "There was a man who didn't like my poems."

And I was silent then because I knew his suffering was greater than mine,

And I forgot the wind and the corns and the heartburn,  
And I went out from the Holy of Holies, through the place of affliction where the lights had fused and the roof was leaking and the patient old men were brewing tea,

And I came to the place called Grosvenor  
And had a drink.

LUDOVIC KENNEDY



KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

## Coincidentials

By INEZ HOLDEN

I ONCE had two flat cats. By which I mean two cats eminently suited to living in a flat. In fact I soon found that the flat suited the cats far better than it suited me.

This flat, which I had taken furnished for the duration of my contract with a film company, was on a top floor and it had a ladder leading through a skylight on to the roof, enabling the cats to scamper about over the slates, which they did most of the night.

As it was not my first excursion into the films I had already learnt by experience that it was best to go

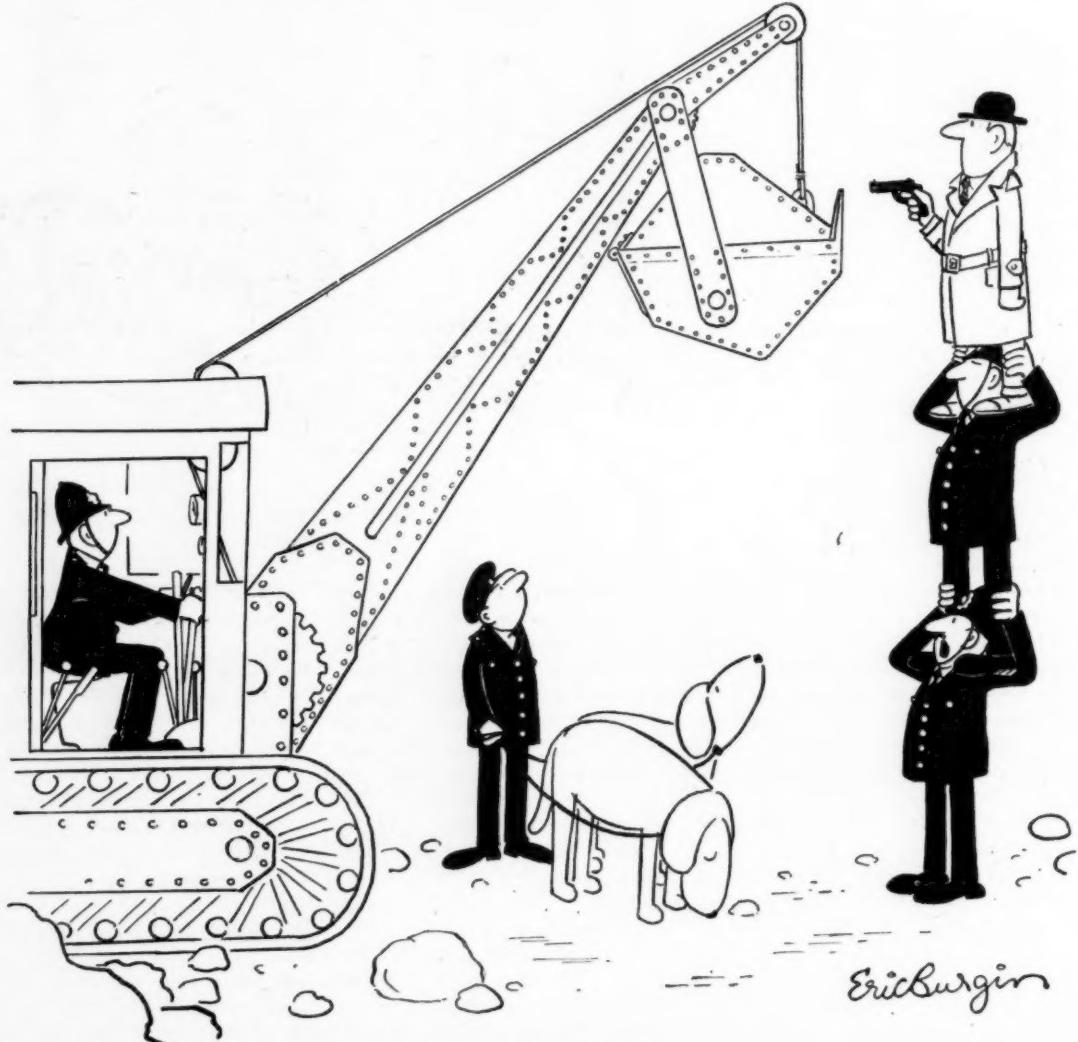
voluntarily off one's head at the start of the "story line" and then back on to one's head again at the conclusion of the "shooting script." I believed that this self-induced psychosis gave one a better balance in the end, while making it possible for one to get on, reasonably well, with the rest of the film unit at the time.

The move I had made in lending my own flat to some friends and taking this other flat near the offices of the film company was a good start on the road to conscious craziness, because the place itself gave the impression that one was

not alone, even when one was—doors opened of their own accord, while the windows, equally ill-made, either would not open at all or would not stay shut.

The sound of whichever cat happened to be running over the roof above my bedroom kept me awake or caused me to have nightmares about the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

I have given a good deal of thought to cats—chiefly to keep my mind off dogs, which I do not like—so I have observed that cats are seldom lightfooted, as is commonly supposed. These two cats, who were called Faber and Faber, after



"Okay, Benson, open up!"

the publishers, had paws which sounded as heavy as the four hoofs of a hack cantering on a high road. If the cats could have been persuaded to gallop the roof together they would have sounded like eight horsemen, which would have been no nightmare at all because, as everyone knows, the whole point of these Horsemen of the Apocalypse is that there should be only four. But clumsy Faber, who was yellow, and heavy-footed Faber, who was black, had such an aversion to each other that they refused to remain together for one instant on the same roof—or even in the same room.

At the time of my existence in the ornate and inconvenient furnished flat, in the company of the moody cats, I was also attending innumerable script conferences. One of the American executives was fond of commenting "Vurry coincidental." Sometimes this was intended as praise and sometimes as condemnation, but it was impossible to tell which, because this American film executive was a one-note, one-toned, one-mood man.

Nevertheless, greatly influenced by the constant repetition of this phrase, I soon noticed that I was myself existing in an atmosphere of "coincidentallys." Everything appeared to happen twice. Incidents repeated themselves as history repeats itself, that is to say not exactly the same the second time, or not so much in a circle as slightly on a spiral.

For instance, I saw in the street one day five nuns in a vast car; then only an hour later, in a department store, five Rabbis buying fountain pen ink. In fact in a surprisingly short space of time two religious groups acting curiously out of character.

On another occasion I noticed that a millionaire was in the news for giving a colossal sum of money to a hospital, while the same day a lunatic escaped from an asylum and, posing as a Member of Parliament in a constituency where the elected representative was not known by sight, he had made a speech which was much applauded. The next day the same millionaire gave another generous donation to the same hospital and another lunatic escaped and, also masquerading as an M.P., opened a garden fête.

Later, when I had finished the film and returned to my own flat and my



"Say, do you stack 'A Thousand and One Nights' under fiction or local intelligence?"

normal frame of mind, I discovered that I had been misled owing to my habit, at that time, of reading the evening paper very late at night and the daily paper very early in the morning; so it was really the same millionaire, the same sum of money, the same lunatic and the same constituency, as reported by different journalists. This, however, was only the cause. The effect was the same as if this was all part of a double life and double vision in a world of startling coincidences.

One day, towards the end of my work on the film, I was walking homewards from a script conference with the words "vurry coincidental" battering at my brain, when I saw my old friend Victor coming up from the basement of what

appeared to be an empty house. In spite of being short-sighted he saw me too and asked if he could walk back with me for a drink.

Victor was a professional revolutionary whose family had, originally, come from Czernowitz, then Rumanian, though it is now Chernovtsy and Ukrainian. Victor was always changing his name too; he had been known as Alexis, Alexeivitch, Alexander, Tom, Tomski and Victor. He was usually leading a group of Partisans in or out of danger, blowing bridges, building barricades and all the rest of it.

Because it was what is called "the height of the London Season," people who like to spend their time moving back and forth from each other's

houses at mealtimes were doing just that in an expensive over-dressed sort of way in the street below the gilded squalor of my fifth-floor furnished flat.

I told Victor that I was employed at a high salary on a film script and that my present surroundings were due, therefore, to my having become a "nouveau riche," by which I meant that it was "nouveau" for me to be "riche."

Victor said "Don't worry, I'm sure it's only temporary. I should say even ephemeral."

I asked him about his partisans and he answered "We have all become Anarchists now."

The yellow cat, Faber, was lying asleep by the ever-open window—as it was the window that wouldn't shut—overlooking the street. The black cat, Faber, out of sight and out of earshot, was no doubt running up and down over the roof in his obsessive way. Victor drank whisky on ice remarking "It's called 'being on the rocks.' I have absorbed the American culture to that extent." He began to talk about the ideology of the Anarchists. As this was the sort of monologue that I have been subjected to rather often in my life I could listen to Victor while idly watching Faber.

Suddenly the yellow cat yawned, stretched, rolled over and fell out of the window.

Victor was at his best now. He ran down the stairs at a fantastic speed and I realized how easy it must be for him

to jump barricades, even cross frontiers without a passport and even change overnight from Partisanship to Anarchy.

Soon Victor came back carrying the yellow cat.

"Don't worry," he said. "The cat isn't hurt at all—only suffering from shock."

For an instant I supposed that Victor had, somehow, managed to reach the street in time to catch the falling cat, then I rejected this as beyond the powers of even this impressive man of action.

Victor carried Faber into my bedroom, wrapped him in a blanket and filled a hot water bottle which he put beside the cat, who soon began to purr and finally to fall asleep.

Downstairs again in the exaggerated surroundings of the drawing-room Victor told me what had happened.

"As soon as I got outside I saw that your cat, Faber I think you call him, had fallen on to the hat of a woman walking by at that moment. You understand she was rather a social sort of woman, her hat, for example, was already elaborate, a complete salad I should say, with flowers and lobsters and all that sort of thing, and now it also had the yellow cat clinging to the top of it with all four paws. So I said 'Excuse me, madam, but I think my cat is on your hat.' I thought there was no point in explaining then that it was really your cat."

"But hadn't she noticed it already?"

"Apparently not," Victor said. "She was clearly the sort of creature who cannot be easily made aware of outside events. We had Royalty rather like that in my grandparents' day, in the country of my origin. I suppose this sort of thing could be considered a quality in certain circumstances, although I'm no Monarchist myself."

"What did you do next?" I asked.

"Well, naturally, the woman stopped when I spoke to her, so I took the cat off her hat. A number of people had turned up, you know. I asked this lady if she would like some brandy, and a man on the outskirts of the crowd, nothing to do with the incident, waved his arms and shouted 'Yes, I would,' but the woman herself said 'No thank you, I am already late for Lady Earthwaite-Crossthwaite's cocktail party,' and she walked on in her high-hatted, high-heeled way."

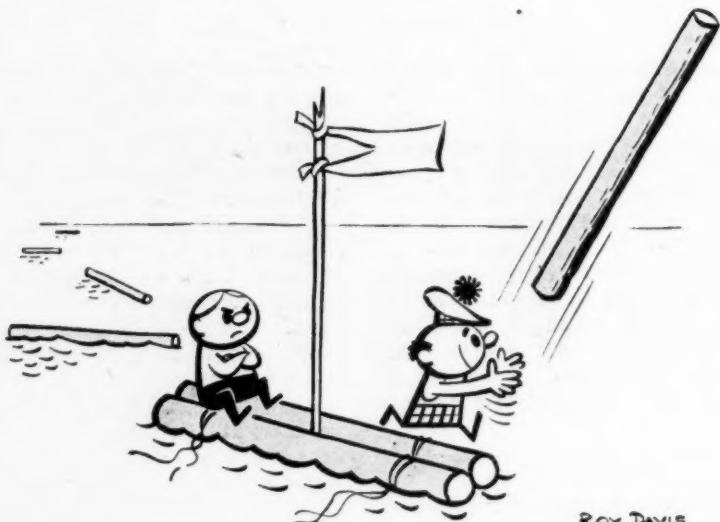
Victor returned to his ice and whisky and also, as if nothing unusual had happened to him either, he returned to his talk of spies, sabotage and Anarchists. He had taken off his spectacles and seemed in a relaxed mood. With me, however, it was just the contrary, because, preoccupied with these recurring "coincidence" which had haunted my life for some weeks, I wondered how this recent event would repeat itself in the usual sinister and slightly off-key manner. Was it possible that the yellow cat would fall out of the window again, landing this time on the Anthony Eden Homburg or bowler hat of some man now coming back from Lady Earthwaite-Crossthwaite's cocktail party?

Soon it was time for Victor to leave, no doubt for some unknown and dangerous destination.

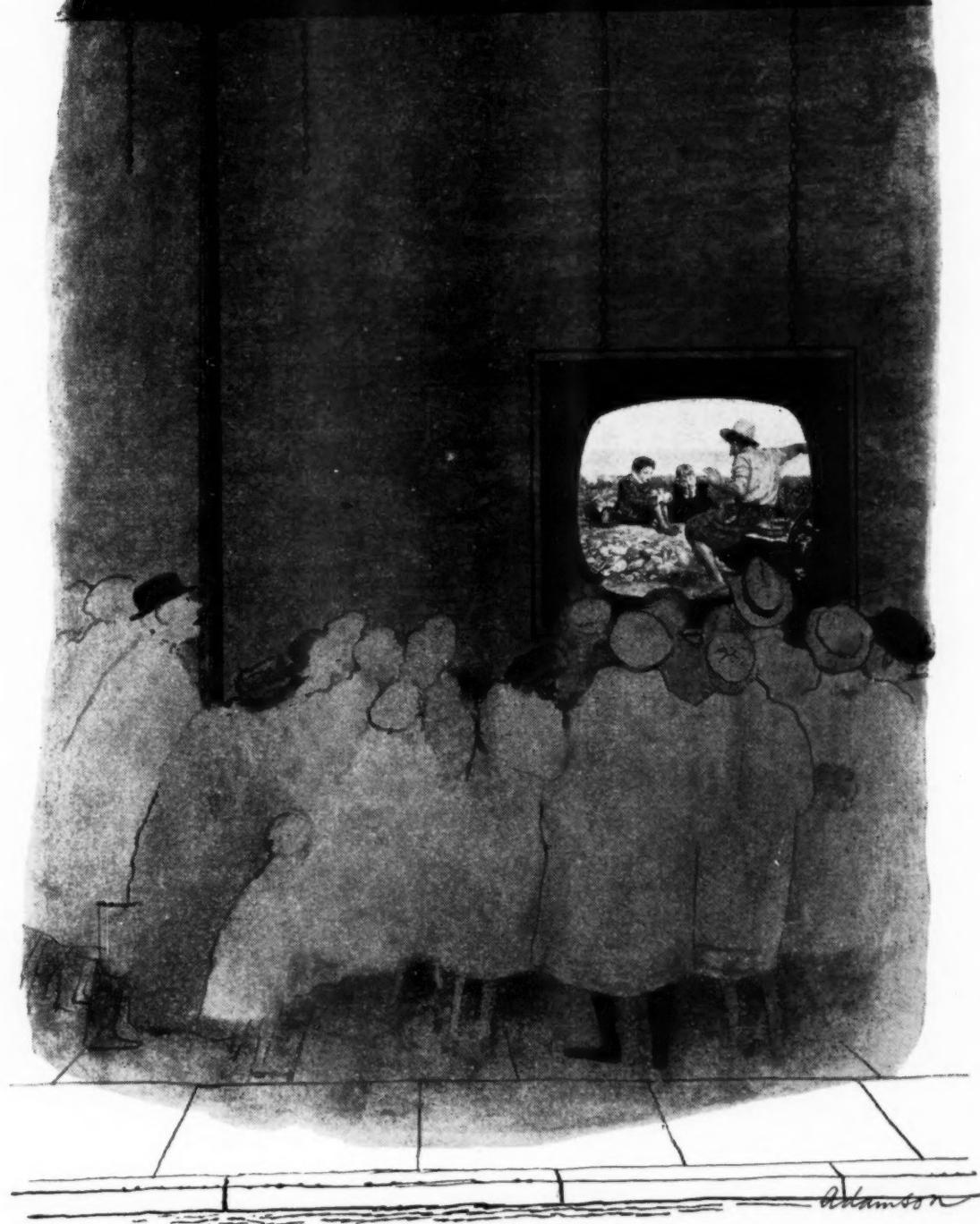
He walked over to the desk.

"What a charming Russian hat, my dear," he said. "Rather like the one I used to wear myself in those good old days in Macedonia—that was before the disgraceful betrayal of the twenty-fourth of course."

Before I had time to tell him that I did not own a Russian hat he had picked it up and put it on his head, without noticing, at first, that it was my black cat, Faber, who had come in when the yellow cat, Faber, had gone out, and until now, tired from galloping over the roof, this flat cat had been lying asleep on the top of the desk.



# Art Dealers · 7



# America Day by Day

By P. G. WODEHOUSE

**A**MERICAN politics are always intricate and hard to understand, but a little book which has just been published will make it easier for the layman to get a glimmer of what political speakers mean when they are appealing to the electors.

Thus:

"This has been one of the dirtiest campaigns in the history of America. No tactic has been too low, vile or underhanded, reprehensible for my opponent to sink to."

This means "I am losing badly."

"There is nothing in my private life that I am ashamed of, but will the voters understand political reality?"

Here what the candidate is trying to say is:

"I was caught taking a \$10,000 bribe once as a judge."

The difficulty with all American political speakers is of course to get them to stop; and here, I think, we can learn a lesson from a little story which may be new to some of you present here to-night. According to Bing Crosby, there used to be an actor in vaudeville called Bob Ward. He did about seven minutes of song and patter, but was always reluctant to go off. As long as there was the faintest murmur of applause he would bound back and take another bow, and



"But, sergeant, motorists are preferring your towing summonses to our parking prices."

one week in Boston he was followed on the bill by General Magano, Marksman and Trick Shot expert. On the last night of the week the General wanted to catch a train to New York and implored Mr. Ward to keep his act to reasonable length so that he could do this.

Bob promised faithfully that he would, but once he got on stage that old urge to stay on hit him and he stayed on, while the General fumed in the wings. The General gesticulated, hissed and beckoned, but to no effect. Finally he strode to the gun rack, selected a rifle, took aim and shot the heel off Ward's shoe. The latter's fifteenth bow, which he was making at the moment, was his last, and the General caught his train.

It has been said that what America needs is a good five-cent cigar. What it needs still more—at election time—is a few General Maganos.

American womanhood is still having its troubles. A recent letter to the domestic relations counsellor of the N.Y. *Daily Mirror*:

"My husband treats me just terrible. We had some company over last night and they wanted some pizza pie and cigarettes, so I sent my husband out to get some and do you know what time he came home? At two in the morning. And he forgot the pizza and cigarettes. What can I do?"

The answer:

Fill your deep freeze with plenty of pizza pie and buy cigarettes by the carton.

Passing lightly over the news from Charleston, Va., that a seventy-year old lady of that town has broken a leg owing to walking on stilts, we come to an item in the morning paper which makes one realize how tough life is for the personnel of the merchant marine. The crew of the motor vessel *James P. Andrews* has "unanimously passed a resolution to have the female cook stop using profane language in front of the crew members."

To paraphrase the author of the *Bab Ballads*:

*She taught them "Bother!" also  
"Blow!"  
Of wickedness the germs,  
And often muttered Darns and Hecks.  
No sailor of the other sex*

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*While porting helms and swabbing decks  
Would use such awful terms.*

One can appreciate how deeply this would shock a sensitive seaman.

Motion picture exhibitors now have another grievance against television. They object to the television weather forecasts, which they say put too much emphasis on rainclouds on the horizon.

"Just let there be a cloud in the sky, and right away the TV boys are warning people to be careful, advising them not to leave their homes. You keep repeating stuff like that, and it's murder on the theatres."

Garry Moore, the comedian, has his complaint to make, too. His beef, as the expression is, is against schoolmasters who ask you to lunch with the boys and half-way through the meal tell you that you are expected to make a "little speech" or, to use the more customary term, to "say a few words." Invited to his son's school last Father's Week and urged to rise and come up with something, he thought, he says, of singing a few choruses of an old favourite entitled "Though I'm Visiting Folks in Elmira, My Heart's Still In Haverstraw," but remembered that the song gets a little racy in the fourth chorus.

He finally came out with the only sound advice he felt could be given with any sense of conviction to a group of lads on the threshold of life.

"Boys," he said, "forget everything else you have been told to-day, but remember this one thing I am telling you, the one golden word you should live by as you go through this world. Never tell a lady her stockings are wrinkled. She may not be wearing any."

So it seems this Londoner, visiting Washington, wanted to send a cable to a friend back home, and the word "England" appeared to puzzle the girl in the telegraph office.

"Do you mind telling me, sir," she said, "if that is a separate country?"

## Canned Entertainment—Latest

"He is leaning against the wall of an amusement arcade, listening to the slurred words of some coroner oozing painfully out of a juke-box."

*From a School magazine*



*"Do you think it's going to rain?"*

## Festivity

By CLAUD COCKBURN

**G**IVEN the fall-out, the ballistic missile and the news that those little men from Venus who used to turn up in Nevada a couple of years ago have been growing up fast and are now big men from Venus, things have got to the point where to sit at the end of the bar interpolating gulps to sobs is commonly thought rather more *comme il faut* than the way that fellow is behaving who is standing on his feet shouting give him Bach, give him Mozart, give him Yehudi Menuhin, give him a glance at Otto Preminger, and for him life blossoms.

Yet an adolescent from Venus, not especially small yet not already terribly big, vetted the western world for the Big Boss the other day and reported that despite rumours to the contrary—such as that all were sunk in juvenile

delinquency, bomb-manufacture, and the calypso—the truth was that if you wanted to meet a man anywhere along the eastern shores of the Atlantic Ocean the place you were going to have to look for him in was a Festival.

The Venusians, having had a lot less time than we have had to get ahead with civilization, culture and that entire type of thing, were absolutely incredulous. The Boss man reportedly sneered "Bach? Preminger? Where you think you've been? Anywhere west of Salzburg, what they do in late spring and early summer is golf, or lie on the beach when available. Bach, pshaw."

"Shaw too, if you like. Write it down to nostalgia."

Moved, probably, by the death-urge, he now told his crass superior that if you really wanted to sit down to a long but

carefully selected menu of music, pictures, cinema and the drama, among the places you would visit this month would be the city of Cork.

It was the end. He was ordered to write a report saying that while Cork is well known for the terrifying ability of its exiles to oust the inhabitants of Dublin, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Boston and Sydney from their comfortable jobs in Government, with special reference to the police department, there is no truth in the rumour that they can organize a Festival in the sense of Festival.

"But it was true what I said in the first place," screamed the deluded victim. "It's a wonderful city and they're going to do wonderful things. Otto Preminger and his Joan of Arc will be there too."

The idea was so utterly upsetting—because it was known on Venus that the only places you can really have a Festival are Venice, Cannes, and Edinburgh, with some runners-up from Germany and Austria—that the man was rushed to the gravity-chamber without further inquiry.

Twenty years ago nobody outside those same Germans and Austrians knew what a Festival was even supposed to be, and they too, those Festival-minded Teutons, had got to the point where they could hardly play two bars of a concerto without suddenly wondering whether the composer's aunt was Jewish, liberalistic, modernistic, *pourri*, and probably related to an aunt of Picasso.

If you are old enough you may recall that when a few years ago people mooted—and at the outset the mootings were considerably muted—the idea of a

Festival of Britain, with Gerald Barry and skylons and even boats on the Thames and fireworks, there were still a lot of people about who said "Shame. What about austerity? Why not spend the money on extending Covent Garden market, or putting up more concrete lighting pillars on main and—if there is anything over—subsidiary roads?"

If you are even older, and were a resident of the town I used to reside near to in Hertfordshire after World War I, you will also recall that just when the Council was about to approve the plans for a handsome war memorial in the shape of an obelisk with fountains and so on, a group of citizenry pushed itself forward with furious cries declaring that such pointless expenditure was an insult to those it was supposed to commemorate.

Asked what they recommended instead, they were unanimous in replying

"An underground lavatory. The men," they said—using a phrase which at that time was rightly considered lethal in its effects on all other arguments—"would have liked it."

Far be it from me to upset a lot of people by suggesting that anything, anywhere, is getting a bit better rather than a lot worse, but I cannot refrain—what's all this?—I will not refrain from hinting that what the underground-lavatory advocates (if one may so generalize, although many of them would no doubt settle for a car park or a new wing on the abattoir) characterize as "Festival Mania" is a move in what one may venture to describe without unduly hysterical enthusiasm as a not-wrong direction.

In Ireland this Festival Feeling has reached the point where Sean O'Casey, no less, has let slip from his Devon home the news that what his new play is going to be about is Festivals—the rivalry, that is, between various Irish towns on the subject of Festivals. And if O'Casey's instinct tells him that that is about the fiercest, most dream-laden conflict currently in progress within a couple of hundred miles of the Abbey Theatre, it would be, as the saying goes, a rash man that would deny it.

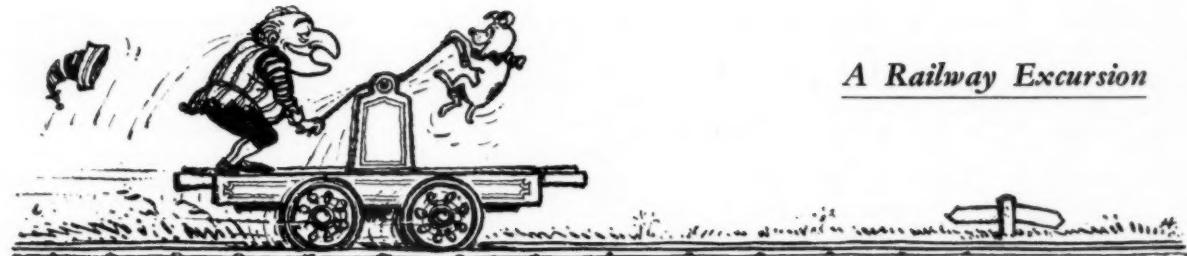
Nevertheless, however exciting the inter-urban rivalries, more stimulating still, one might think, is the sight of the underground-lavatory people being routed on a terrain which they believed they had fully conquered and were going to dominate for ever. When Ireland, a few years ago, first went into the festival business in a big way, the U.L.P.s hardly bothered to protest. They said the whole thing would be a terrible flop, and if the money had to be spent, why not spend it on drains and signposts or the over-burdened taxpayer?

Last year, when Cork announced it would hold an international Film Festival, they became really irked and enervated, because first, how can our chaps compete with those Venetians? and secondly, why not spend the money on new dust-carts or something truly progressive of that kind?

Confronted with success of Film Festival and news that this year's film-choral-and-general festival is going to be bigger and for all we know better, they are skulking in the back alleys—praying, no doubt, for rain.



"For heaven's sake, darling, will you stop trying to read significance into every damn tune he plays?"



## A Railway Excursion

# The Passenger is Always Right

DURING the last six reigns a host of selfless citizens have spared time and ink in an endeavour to teach the managements of railways their business.

Not all their letters of advice and remonstrance have been lost; a few, surviving spring-cleaning, mergers and nationalization, have been gathered into the charitable files of British Railways (by courtesy of whose archives and public relations staff this article has been made possible). A great many more letters may be rediscovered by anyone with sufficient energy to explore the files of newspapers.

Some of the letter-writers had suggestions for making the railways safer; for example, by placing huge woollen bolsters between carriages, by causing the locomotive to tow the carriages on a mile-long cable, or by empowering the guard to toss burning pitch-balls on to the track in fog.

Others were anxious to preserve the directors from moral pitfalls. Thus, in 1845, Mr. Thomas Collins of Coventry deplored the fact that a railway company was underwriting a "gross and disgusting exhibition" in that city of unfortunate legend, and urged the board "not to allow the desire of gain to make you the patrons of immorality." No doubt it was men like Mr. Collins who wrote to express doubt whether the railways had a moral duty to run excursions to public executions. Countless members of the public wrote or petitioned against the running of trains on Sundays, and there were shareholders who refused to accept that proportion of their dividend which represented the profits on Sabbath-breaking.

Most of the letter-writers, however, were concerned to make the railways more human, more polite, more

By E. S. TURNER

comfortable and more efficient. Some of their recommendations, as will be seen, have been carried out; some have not.

The early rail officials, though often accused of running their enterprises solely for the shareholders' benefit (an accusation seldom made by the shareholders), were not insensitive to the value of good public relations. Mr. Brunel, of the Great Western, wrote to the company's secretary in 1839:

"People have more than once told me that although they never meet with incivility from our officers, yet that there is at all our stations a military coldness and an independence and absence of that officious politeness which most customers like."

In that fretful dawn the public and the railway staffs tended to expect unduly high standards of each other. The directors, for example, ordered that there should be no tipping of the company's servants, but the public persisted in insulting these proud fellows with largesse. In 1839 John Brand, a porter at Birmingham, appealed to the directors of the London and Birmingham Railway against his dismissal:

"Unfortunately for me a gentleman by the Liverpool train put into my hand a sixpence for putting his luggage on a car and before I could return him the sixpence or explain to him that I was not allowed to accept of money, Mr. Reid, my inspector, came and demanded what the gentleman had put into my hand . . ."

The Board dismissed Brand's appeal; apparently he had been unlucky enough to have coins pressed into his hand before.

The directors of the Great Western went to great pains to discourage

travellers from smoking. In 1840 two first-class passengers were seen to be puffing cigars as their train entered Bath. A police sergeant remonstrated with them and quoted the appropriate by-laws, but they continued to smoke in the train between Bath and Keynsham. Such defiance was not to be borne. The passengers were tracked down and further questioned; eventually their consciences impelled them to write a letter "strongly expressive of their contrition." They escaped with a 40s. penalty and a proclamation of their punishment in each Bristol newspaper.

Probably most ire was generated in those early years over the locking of carriage doors. The companies insisted that this was necessary for the passengers' protection; it also prevented them from straying. Travellers in "bodily discomfort" complained hotly about dilatoriness in unlocking doors when trains arrived at termini after long journeys. Only one official, it seems, was authorized to give permission and sometimes he was hard to find, or otherwise occupied. Most mortifying was the experience of a Mr. Churton and friend who decided to take a short excursion on the Great Western. Having bought their tickets, they were duly locked in their compartment. After the lapse of some time no engine had been attached to the train, and, realizing they would not have time to make their projected trip, they decided to ask for their money back. This notion shocked the station staff, who held that as the two men had paid for a ride they would have to go for one. Nobody (according to Mr. Churton's letter of complaint) would free them or listen to their grievance—"instead of procuring redress or even explanation we only met with ridicule." Mr. Churton then asked a question possibly unique in

railway annals: "Whether a person having entered a carriage is *obliged* to go by the train?"

With some reluctance the railways consented to a partial unlocking of doors after fifty-three people had been burned to death in a locked train at Versailles in 1842.

Among the subjects of complaint in the early 'forties were these: paying for first-class accommodation and failing to find any on the train; the taciturnity of guards; the reluctance of companies' servants to wipe puddles of rain water from the seats; refusal to let passengers sit where they wanted (that is, in positions of danger); splitting up parties of friends into different compartments according to their destinations, in order to save trouble at stations; the loss of roof-borne luggage by fire; the effrontery of clerks who said that such-and-such a place was "on the line" when it was two miles distant; and the furious driving of station coaches, the horses for which were (allegedly) recruited from beasts discarded by professional men as over-prone to bolt.

The railway servants had their own grievances against the public, who were too anxious to share the mystery of their craft. Not only had passengers a mania for "stretching their legs" at every minor halt, but they would jump from moving trains in an effort to recover their hats. Monotonously, revellers fell from their coaches, and so, for that matter, did the sober.

It was not always the passenger who carried the war against the company's servant; sometimes it was the other way round. Mr. Martin Batey, from a colliery in Yorkshire, was required to explain to the railway office at Darlington why he had occupied somebody else's seat in a station coach on a wet day. He wrote: "I got inside the coach and a gentleman came afterwards and claimed the seat. I was not willing to give it up, but took the gentleman on my knee and rode to Darlington. I should have given it up immediately, but I thought a little inconvenience inside was better than being starved outside."

Even in the 'forties passengers had begun to agitate for sleeping accommodation. One night in 1842 when William Wagstaff boarded the London train at Warrington a friend told him that he was in the "bed carriage," though superficially it looked like any

other carriage. As there was another passenger in the compartment the well-bred Mr. Wagstaff restrained his curiosity to discover "the mechanism of the bed." When the other traveller got out at Birmingham, he began lifting up the backs of the seats, but failed to uncover the secret. Abandoning the search, he sat down again, and shortly afterwards accidentally kicked a cushion under the opposite seat. This he pulled out and found that it fitted between the two seats. Gratified by his belated discovery, he slept to Euston, where he was "somewhat disagreeably interrupted by a claim for £1 12s. 6d. extra." This Mr. Wagstaff held to be unfair. He would have used the bed earlier if he had known how to operate it, but as he had been unable to solve the riddle before Wolverton he claimed that the charge should be proportionately abated. Travellers, he pointed out, were "chargeable for acts, not intentions."

The passengers who had most cause to complain were those in third-class carriages, but they were a rough lot who expressed their dissatisfaction, if they felt any, by means other than letter-writing. They travelled in open trucks, often at night. It was not unlike journeying on the outside of a stage coach, except that the wind was thrice as strong and brought with it not only rain and sleet but fiery coals. Later, on some routes, the third-class passengers were put in roofed, seatless trucks. As a change from enjoying an all-round view of the scenery they now enjoyed none at all, unless they cared to pull aside small shutters to see where they were. The advantage from the companies' point of view was that the passengers were unable to fall out, jump out or throw missiles and infants on to the track.

Second-class passengers were more articulate and had some reason to be so. A Mr. H. O. Bradford wrote to the Great Western in 1839 to say:

"I came to Uxbridge in your second-class carriage last evening and am now laid up with severe rheumatism and pain in the side and aching in the bowels produced by the intensely severe current engendered partly by the rapid travel, as well as a smart wind blowing. My object in writing this is to point out the indispensable necessity of having closed instead of open backs to the boxes . . . I am aware that these carriages must not be too acceptable but there is a medium in all things and one would imagine that the mixing with ploughmen, mechanics and all kinds of people sufficient with the open exposure to wind and rain to make them avoided if a respectable person's finances did not compel him to take place in an uncomfortable station and mixed company . . ."

From the aspect of revenue it was clearly important that second-class should not be made "too acceptable." On certain railway platforms second-class passengers were corralled in an inferior part of the platform (third-class had no official standing-room). It grieved the companies that, when so much had been done to dignify first-class travel, citizens who could afford a higher standard of comfort should take to travelling second or third. Railway lore has it that this tendency was countered by paying chimney sweeps to travel in third-class.

There were, however, enough disagreeable characters travelling in second or third without deliberately introducing more. In 1840 Mr. Thomas Letts intervened to protect a female from the unruly attentions of a "labouring man," for whom he secured "14 days in the



House of Correction." Mr. Letts' object in informing the Great Western about this episode was "to urge the necessity of placing some kind of protection in each carriage or the means of communicating with one of the conductors, for I was compelled to tolerate this fellow's violence and abuse nearly the whole way between Slough and Paddington, in addition to devoting nearly the whole day to securing him his deserts."

It was, perhaps, the dread of this kind of situation which inspired Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson to submit, in 1847, her idea for establishing communication between passengers and locomotive crew. Over each compartment there was to be a parachute, normally in the open position. A passenger in trouble would pull a cord which would close the parachute directly overhead and at the same time jerk the finger of one of the crew on the footplate. No satisfactory communicating device was invented for at least fifty years afterwards. In 1875 a young lady seeking to elude an amorous cavalry colonel had to climb out of the compartment and hang on to the side of the coach.

At an early stage there were compartments marked "Ladies Only," but ladies showed no more inclination to use them than they do to-day. In 1875 "A Travelling M.P." wrote to *The Times* to demand the reason for this boycott. His ignorance was dispelled by "A British Mother" who explained that such compartments were often used by nurses and that "all ladies are not prepared to encounter the *désagréments* incident to the crying, feeding, etc., of children not their own." Another lady wrote to say that she had been nearly burned to death through the "bungling manipulation" of a spirit lamp used by

one of these nurses. It was left to "A Young Lady" to explain the many advantages to be derived from travelling in the company of gentlemen. Ladies were unable to open stiff doors, or to prevent other ladies from falling. Furthermore "ladies can seldom give one correct information." But there were other advantages in mixed travel, besides the purely practical. "I have often been greatly amused," wrote this gentle correspondent, "yes, and instructed by the conversation of gentlemen in railway carriages, whereas ladies as a rule do not talk about anything but private matters, which, of course, have no interest to a stranger . . ."

The companies received a good deal of gratuitous advice from globe-trotting travellers who thought that railways abroad were much better run. In 1874 Mr. F. Trevithick informed an official of the Great Western that "Rome has churches without supplicants and schools without learners but their trains are punctual at all stations." This seems to dispose of the legend that no Italian trains ran to time before Mussolini came to power.

By the 'seventies the war between smokers and non-smokers was growing bitter, and the railway companies (who had been forced by Parliament in 1868 to provide smoking compartments) came under heavy attack from both sides. "I need not describe to you a second-class smoking carriage," wrote a reader of *The Times* in 1874. "A country pothouse would be a palace to it for there would be some sand on the floor and other conveniences." A smoker retorted that railway officials took delight in filling smoking compartments with women and children; he

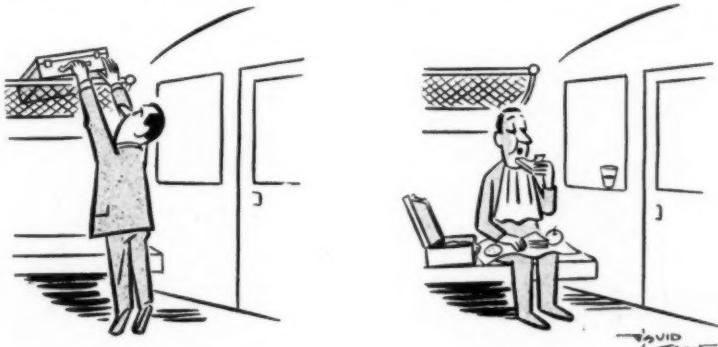
demanded not smoking compartments but smoking carriages.

The railways were content to let newspaper readers fight these things out between themselves. No public relations officer jumped in with an explanation of official policy. Sometimes the responsibility of answering a complaint would be assumed by a reader with a financial interest. Thus, in 1899, when a traveller protested at the abolition of second-class (a severe blow to "those whose finances are unequal to first-class and their feelings to third") a shareholder patiently explained the economics of railway travel; revealing, in the process, that "it is still possible to satisfy third-class travellers without providing lavatories."

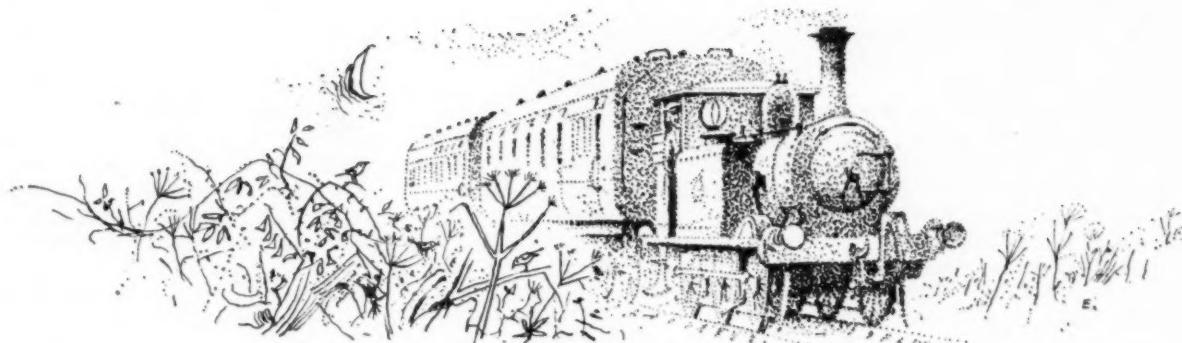
By the century's end there were corridor coaches, sleeping coaches and restaurant coaches (no more dashing from one meal halt to another, as on a military train). It was no longer necessary to hire foot-warmers, for carriages were steam-heated. An electric push-button would summon an attendant and the communication cord would (usually) alert the driver. The infuriating business of changing trains when the gauges differed was at last ended.

It should have been the halcyon age of railway travel, but the public were still full of ideas for improving it. Why did Metropolitan District stations refuse to accept tricycles? Why, when a man left some item of property on a seat to stake his claim, must attendants whisk it off to the lost property office? Why (this was from Lord Hugh Cecil in 1896) did the restaurant at Victoria charge 3s. 6d. for stewed steak with a whisky and Seltzer, and one shilling for afternoon tea? His lordship had been assured that it was necessary to keep the restaurant select, but "prices on this scale are likely to make the restaurant not only select but lonely."

Yet the public were not ungrateful. Some of them, indeed, felt that changes were coming too swiftly. When one of those globe-trotters suggested in *The Times* the adoption of the American one-class coach, instead of "a series of packing cases," his suggestion fell on stony ground. One reader described it as "a rather characteristic ebullition of academic fraternity." Fifty years afterwards we still cling to our packing cases.







Brighton "Terrier," Hayling Island Branch Line

## Branch-Line Fever

**B**EFORE taking an early taxi to Paddington I put on my Rare Railways Waistcoat. This was in peasoup satin, with motifs of forget-me-nots, fog detonators, viaduct arches and Hudson the Railway King's profile, the whole furbished with a set of Stephenson's Rocket buttons haggled for the previous Saturday in the Portobello Road.

I was off by special train to see the Festiniog Railway, North Wales. Than which nothing could be rarer. The Festiniog Railway is very old and very small and spry, dating from 1832, snug as a pocket borough, with rails a little less than two feet apart, served still by tubby engines born in the 'sixties. One of the engines is called *Palmerston*. If the Festiniog Railway directors were men of action instead of irresponsible dreamers who stare out of windows all day *Palmerston* would have been fitted with dyed sidewhiskers long before this.

The first-class carriages of Festiniog are quaint, shamelessly so. Strong, stern men—wholesale hardware factors and electricity board attorneys, for example—have been known to giggle and collapse with gratification at the sight of them. Designed apparently for rich circus midgets, they have monogrammed antimacassars on blue upholstery, sepia photographs of deer glens, small tarnished mirrors and a strong feeling of crinolines and stove-pipe hats. There's sure to be a penny-farthing or bath cabinet stowed aft in the guard's brake, you tell yourself.

The rarity of the Festiniog Railway is admitted by all: even, out of their mouth-corners, with much anguished

lip-gnawing, by the directors of Talyllyn, a rival rare railway beyond the mountains to the south. The Talyllyn directors and the Festiniog directors are known to make images of each other in plastic wood, hammer in carpet tacks, then run over them ceremonially by the light of gibbous moons while poison herbs brew on the footplate. Many an eldritch titter is heard at such times among the foothills.

When it comes to really fey and goosefleshy jobs, the Festiniogers undoubtedly have an edge on the Talyllynites. They own a Corpse Car. To this the Talyllynites have no answer.

The Corpse Car is a black cube with little gilt urns at the top corners. It is floored in a grisly way with rollers for the easier shipping and unshipping of coffins. On the outside walls are hooks to hang wreaths on. In dundrearie days than ours the Corpse Car, hauled by *Palmerston* (cylinders and stroke 8½ inches x 12 inches) or by *Welsh Pony* (c. and s. 8½ inches x 12 inches), plied between hill hamlets and a lineside burial ground snowy with marble. Level crossing gates were flung open at its approach by lady station masters who, being Welsh, wore white aprons and witches' hats. It was all very solemn, grand and grotesque.

Now a bit bleached and peeling, the Corpse Car languishes in a rolling stock shed lower down the line, at Boston

Lodge. Nobody knows what to do about it. Double-bassoon players, cement salesmen, dealers in small glass giraffes and city rectors with dog collars inside boiler suits—solid men all who pay their pound a year membership fee to the Festiniog Railway Society and work on the line at week-ends as amateur guards or signalmen or platelayers—gather round the Corpse Car and scratch their ears uncertainly. One says, or so I conceive:

"Take the rollers out, put in a buffet counter, regild those urns, repaint the outside in Dayglo green and pink. Stock up with ginger pop, chocolates, comic postcards, plastic statuettes of David Lloyd George (for people *do* remember him in these parts) and

Carnarvon Castle souvenir mugs. You'll do a roaring tripper trade down at Portmadoc, holiday times. The thing would be a gold mine."

Another, judicially refilling his pipe, says:

"Regild the urns, right. But stick black feathers in them. Garland the car in black crape. Install lectern and small harmonium. Hire out the lot as a mobile crematorium chapel. That would be equally good business. And so much more reverent."

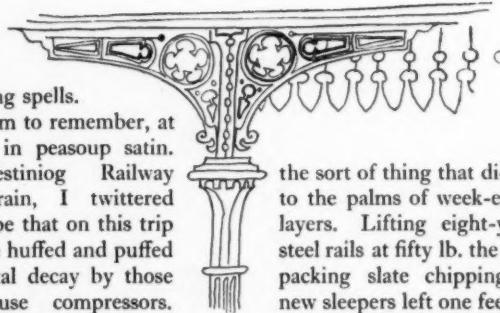
Lots of suggestions, you see. But no unanimity. Everybody goes on scratching his ear. The Corpse Car stays potently on in its shed. The Talyllynites creep into corners and howl apprehensively every



time they think of it sitting out there at Boston Lodge brooding and hatching spells.

I left myself, I seem to remember, at Paddington Station in peasoup satin. Boarding the Festiniog Railway Society's special train, I twittered tactfully: "I do hope that on this trip we're not going to be huffed and puffed into premature mental decay by those dreadful Westinghouse compressors. Personally I feel, chaps, and hope you're all with me here, that the vacuum brake shows a nicer British regard for aesthetic intangibles, hey? Compressors, the snorting creatures, are best left, like garlic and the right-hand rule of the road, to foreigners, don't you find?"

I had memorized this, simplifying it a bit, from the latest SRUBLUK\* handout. It won for me a certain consideration. Somebody pinned on my lapel a Festiniog Railway badge showing a Fairlie loco head-on, ringed by the Garter and topped by Prince of Wales' feathers. All talking at once, eager directors piled line-charts, illustrated folders, wings of chicken, publicity silver-prints and bottles of export ale into my lap. After nationalization, they chorused, the Festiniog Railway drooped, festered and decayed for eight years. In 1954 a moneyed enthusiast, aided by less moneyed enthusiasts,



the sort of thing that did happen to the palms of week-end plate-layers. Lifting eight-yard-long steel rails at fifty lb. the yard and packing slate chippings under new sleepers left one feeling gay, important and slightly shredded.

At Wolverhampton Low Level we all got out and shinned up signal standards, stood on each others' shoulders or hung by the heels from bridge girders. This was so we could take pictures of *The City of Truro* (102·3 miles an hour speed record on Plymouth mail run, 1904), a deep-bosomed beauty in black and orange which had been freed from York Railways Museum expressly to haul us the rest of the way to the Welsh border. Then we all climbed back. Life went on. Young men wearing the orange and Brunswick green tie of the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society sat intently at saloon windows, watched for quarter mile posts, clicked stop watches, entered speeds on pink forms. A man in an R.A.F. blazer who drank bottled bitter from his own *stein*, which was modelled on the Tower of Babel, came up to me and said "When you go through Leighton Buzzard tunnel on the footplate you put a sheet over your head and crouch in a corner of the cab. So do the driver and fireman. The tunnel's so small that the train only just fits. Even with a sheet over your head you choke with dust and fumes and are removed to Leighton Buzzard hospital in a pneumatic-tyred coma for artificial respiration."

Over the rim of his stout a loco inspector with the face of a prelate said that once when Soldier Hill, greatest driver of them all, was scheduled to reach Paddington half an hour after pub closing time he made the Plymouth mail leap like a leopard on down gradients. He gave every signalman on the line high blood pressure, migraine and the vapours, and was taking his pint of wallop in the Load of Hay by quarter to ten. A week later Soldier Hill took a wrong turning in a marshalling yard, ploughed through buffers, wrecked a hawker's stable and killed the hawker's pony in a street outside.



bought out the line and patched up engines and rolling stock. So far they had reopened three and a half miles for authorized passenger traffic, and they purposed to reopen the remaining ten some day.

One of the directors, a politely nurtured and sedentary person—he collects Picasso pots and carved auks' eggs and is wild about Webern—had scarred palms. That, he laughed, was

\*Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the United Kingdom.

To all this the orange and Brunswick green ties listened with open eyes and mouths.

And suddenly there we were at Minffordd, halted amid rhetorical mountains, with gleams afar of estuary and sea and clouds the colour of butter piling the sky. Over the big railway line ran the little Festiniog one. A row of dolls' coaches awaited us, sunlight making the most of their new cream and green paint. They were hitched to one of the nicest and silliest engines anybody ever saw, an engine with two boilers, a driving cab in the middle and two chimneys, one at each end. The thing was obviously capable of staging a stiff tug of war with itself. The nameplate on her crupper said *Taliesin*. As soon as *Taliesin* saw us she whooped.

Then, genially swaying and bumbling, she hauled us up and down the three and a half rehabilitated miles between Portmadoc and Penrhyneddraeth. All the hamlets had done themselves over with bunting and put on their Sunday suits. At level crossings there were respectful, handwaving knots. It was in all respects a journey worthy of a railway with a Corpse Car.

It had been my intention to write of many another rare Branch Line beloved of SRUBLUK—for that amiable society spreads its protecting wings over any little railway that is threatened by neglect and the slow grassing-over of its single tracks, its Halts and its inscrutable black sheds. But the Festiniog Railway and its Friends have a strange compulsion. Those who have once been drawn by *Taliesin* do not care to mention anything so common-or-garden as a railway of standard gauge or an engine that fails to meet itself in the middle. The Festiniog Railway is the queen of rarities.

CHARLES REID



## Per Goods

**R**AILWAY worshippers abound. Their temples and sects are legion. They haunt Clapham, alert for freak wheel arrangements, or build cork models of Marylebone in attics. There are collectors, desperate for unused return halves on the old Bodmin & Wadebridge; memory men, rapidly muttering the Sunday services between Knebworth and Ottery St. Mary while dashing off a sketch map showing British track development as at March, 1846. Some are obsessed with riding on closed branch lines; others just wait to pounce on Sir Brian Robertson's neck when he closes another one; and all inhabit the nightmares of any professional railwayman, who would sooner run the length of Manchester Victoria & Exchange platform (2,194 ft.) than meet their glittering eye.

But the odd thing is that none of them is the least bit interested in Goods. Why? Where are the Friends of Freight; the Societies for the Study of Grease Axle-Box Practice and Performance?

Compare the humdrum passenger journey from King's Cross to Edinburgh with the thrill-packed exploits of a roll of linoleum consigned from Middleton - in - Teesdale to Driffield. Human cargo has some slight directional mechanism of its own; but the linoleum is a deadweight of responsibility on the cogs and cranes and conveyor belts of a delicate and complex system in which labelling, portering, sorting, on and off loading, fluctuations from road to rail (possibly with benefit of horses), waybills in triplicate and finally the crunch of deliveryman's boots up the front drive all play their part. If the operation takes a fortnight it is only because the consignor has stupidly chosen a destination across country. Consign, instead, a wagonload of cows or steel scrap from

London to Peterborough, running down the main trunk flow, and it will be there as smartly as most telegrams.

Yet the railway student spurns these marvels. Why? Is it the snob in him? Are forty-five wagons of coke trundled at 20 m.p.h. beneath his attention, as against twelve sleek coaches hauled by a noble, richly-liveried monster with the driver's name displayed on its flank? It may surprise him to learn that the noble monster pulling out this morning with a load of luxuriating flesh and blood may well have pulled in last night with a load of bicycle-parts and quick-frozen vegetables. Let him be shamed by this demonstration of practical democracy.

You, sir, with your glib information that these islands boast 5,594 passenger stations . . . did you know that goods stations beat this soundly with a splendid total of 6,183, marshalling yards excluded? Withdraw your nose from that narrow-minded *Bradshaw* for a minute and reflect with awe that there is a freight timetable too—that your seventeen thousand daily goods trains are uncompromisingly disciplined to the minute-hand of the guard's railway watch, and are not, as you imagined, loosed haphazardly into the traffic stream whenever a bit of line obligingly becomes vacant.

And since the goods guard has diffidently obtruded himself, let us consider the fine-worked tapestry of his strenuous life. We have hitherto written him off as a near-superannuated snoozer, idly clanking his last few hundred miles into retirement. False, all false. True, the passenger guard, flamboyant with flag, whistle and stylish leap on to the moving train, radiates a superficial glamour. But what is there beyond, except an occasional hand with

a folding baby-carriage or a box of pigeons? The goods guard never dare let up for a moment. No sooner has he assembled his train from a jig-saw of bits and pieces and creaked a few laborious miles on his way than he has to start shedding trucks in the middle and joining up the ends, or cringe into a siding to give place to a lordly express—remembering to change his rear lights in case the dimwitted blueblood misreads them as an obstruction on its own line, grinds to a halt and makes its snoring load five minutes late for a cocktail party. He is forever counting, adding up, checking, ticking off; inspecting for leaking lime, unpinned tarpaulins, ice-cream under faulty refrigeration, cattle gnawing the bolts off wagons. A consultation with his driver means a quarter-mile walk. His van is bleak, and wits chalk jokes on it. The cries of sheep beat remorselessly on his ears. On top of it all he is constantly in fear. Should the load of stair-carpet safely brought to Motspur Park have actually been slipped at Epsom? What happened to the twelve dozen cases of china during that sudden shunting shock outside Leuchars Junction?

But this is only a corner of a rich field for study. Who will come forward and be good to Goods? Any Society taking the hint should lose no time, because the old order is changing. Owners of tape-recorders, especially, should hasten to capture a specimen of the sad, sweet *per-ping-ping*, *ter-ting-tong*, *per-ping-pong-pong* which is still to be heard in sidings, and is due to the acquisition, under the 1947 Act, of 400,000 goods wagons with absolutely no facilities for continuous braking. Under the Modernization Plan the railway worshipper, though he may not know it, is spending part of his £1,200,000,000 on stilling that nostalgic music for ever.

J. B. BOOTHROYD



# Candidus at the Ballet

By LORD KINROSS

**C**ANDIDUS, my young guest from afar, finds himself slightly puzzled, in this best of all possible lands, by our attitude towards the Russians. Not long ago, travelling north together, we happened to meet in the train a friend of mine, a Liberal peer, who was on his way northwards too. I introduced him to Candidus, who was duly impressed by his lordliness.

"A man of gracious manners," he remarked later, methodically opening his notebook. "His name?"

"His name is Amulree."

"He is on his way to his estates?"

"No. He has no estates. He is on his way to the city of Hull."

"And what will he do there?"

"He will lecture, he told me, to the citizens of Hull, on the subject of Russian medicine."

"*Russian* medicine?" Candidus was appalled. "You mean the various poisons and drugs that the Communists use?"

"Not necessarily. Just medicine."

"Then he is not a Soviet agent, this lord?"

It was my turn to be appalled. "Certainly not. He is the best of all possible Liberals. He believes that medicine has no frontiers."

"But will he not then be summoned, on his return, to explain himself before the Un-British Activities Committee of the House of Lords?"

I smiled. "There is no such thing as an Un-British activity."

A few days after our return to London I chanced to take him to Covent Garden. We were to see a rehearsal, I explained, of the Russian Ballet.

He gave me a sharp look. "Then art has no frontiers either?"

"Of course not. Anyway it's the Royal Ballet now."

"I should hope so."

There, however, on the stage before us was an unmistakable Russian scene, with plastic snowflakes falling from the

flies on to snow-covered domes and rooftops.

"Leningrad, I presume," remarked Candidus drily.

"No. St. Petersburg." And I added, by way of amplification, "1830. Petrushka."

"And that gentleman not in costume, teaching the dancers how to dance with little steps of his own, he has a most suspicious guttural accent. He is a Russian, I suppose?"

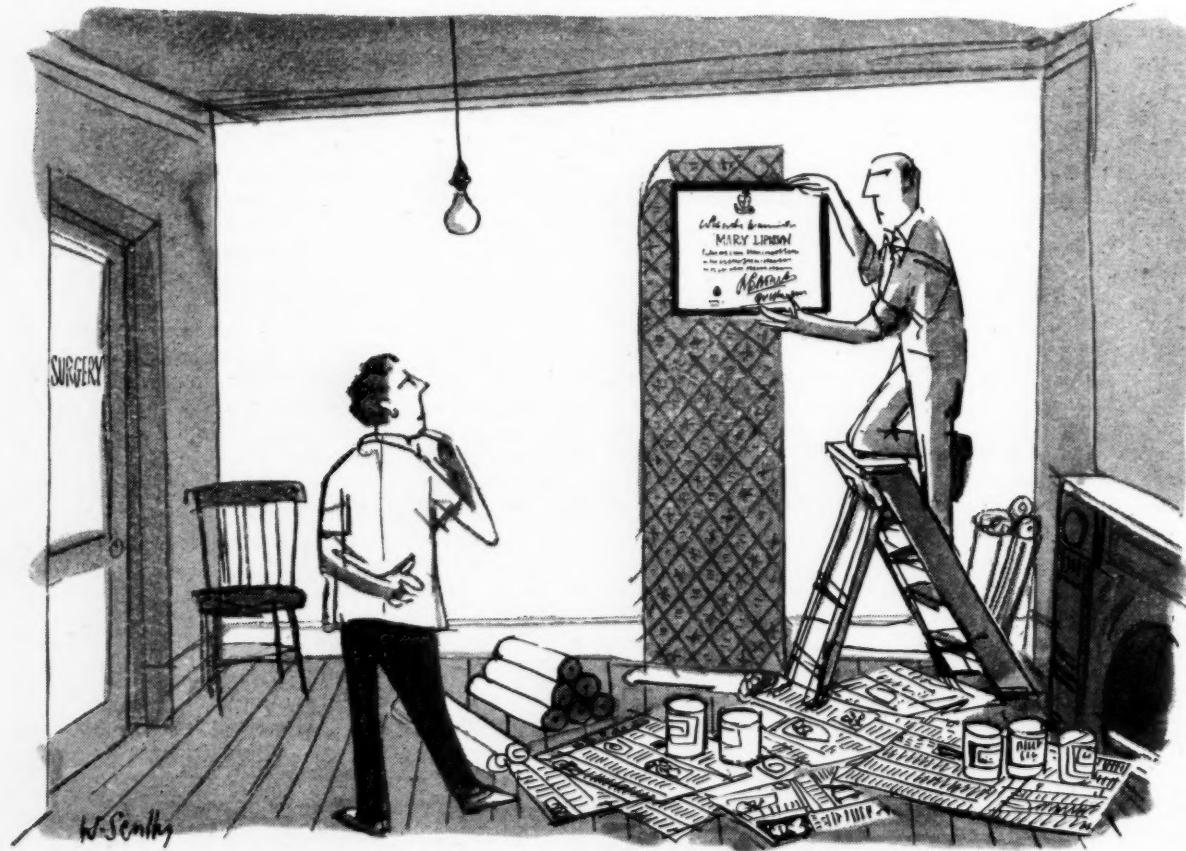
"Monsieur Grigoriev, yes. But of course a White one."

"So he tells you, no doubt."

I tried to reassure him. "Anyway, you will observe that there is nothing Russian about these various dancers—Fonteyn, Grant, Clegg, Ashton."

Candidus was scanning his programme. "But here is Nerina, and here is Markova."

"Markova is a Miss Marks, from London, and Nerina a Miss Judd, from South Africa."





Candidus gave me a cynical shrug and turned to watch the dancing. All of a sudden he exclaimed "But that is a coloured man dancing."

"Yes. The Blackamoor."

"It is not, I think, at all proper that he should be dancing with that white girl, Miss Fonteyn."

Behind us two young men were chattering.

"Heaven, my dear!"

"Not bad, my dear. But nothing to Nijinsky. I sigh for the Russians!"

It was, I thought, time to lead Candidus away. At the gala performance a few nights later he was in a mellower mood. The arc-lights in the foyer impressed him, and the ladies and gentlemen hanging around beneath them, all glossy and expensive in their evening clothes.

"They are waiting here to see the Queen Mother and the Princess?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"We shall wait here too?"

"No. They do not come in this way. They come by the private entrance."

Our box for the moment was occupied. "It is full of cannons," it was explained to us.

"Cannons?" exclaimed Candidus. "I understand. For the royal family's protection against these Russians."

"No, not that sort of cannons." His face lit up. "Canons of the Church then?"

"No. Just telescopic press cameras that people call cannons."

The royal party arrived, and the cannons were trained on them. The lights went down. The performance began. Candidus, enthralled, forgot his objection to the coloured man.

During the interval the Queen Mother proceeded from her box to her retiring-room with a glitter of diamonds and an all-embracing smile which Candidus, in common with everybody else, took as meant for him alone. We had a drink in the foyer, gazing at one half of the audience gazing downwards at the other, and at the other half gazing upwards at the one, until Candidus dragged me away to linger by the Royal Box, hoping for another Queenly and Motherly smile. He insisted on lingering until the next ballet had started, when a courteous, well-dressed gentleman, with grey moustaches, tactfully and quietly requested us to return to our box.

"A most distinguished man," remarked Candidus. "He is the Master of the Household?"

"No. The house detective."

"Ah yes, I see," he said with a knowing look. His eye was then caught by

the spectacle of a portly gentleman, who stood with dignity outside the box throughout the performance. "He is the Chief of Police?"

I smiled, and shook my head. "No. His name is Lord Waverley."

Candidus expressed satisfaction. "It is good that the Queen Mother should have so substantial a man to watch over her."

He turned his attention to the final ballet, clapping with enthusiasm afterwards until his hands grew too hot to do so any more, expressing his approval, in the interests of hygiene, on the Cellophane paper in which the bouquets of the dancers were wrapped. He had enjoyed his evening, he said. But suddenly, as we were leaving, a cloud darkened his youthful brow: "That man going out with his coat collar turned up, he is surely Lord Amulree?"

I looked round, but he had gone. On the way home Candidus was silent and pensive. When he bade me good night he said "I am frankly uneasy about those two Russian dancers who call themselves Marx and Judd. I hope Lord Waverley has his eye on them. It would not surprise me at all to learn that they were friends of Lord Amulree, who is so concerned about Russian medicine."



*"The children just don't seem to confide in us any more."*

## Calder Hall

(Sixty-five years after Tennyson)

TIS the place and all around it huts and concrete purlieus sprawl while a Latter-day Lake Poet ruminates o'er Calder Hall . . .

In the spring a kindlier Dulles beams upon the chastened West,  
in the spring E. W. Swanton turns to face another Test.

In the spring a new reactor breeds within the atomic pile.  
In the spring a larger mushroom billows over Christmas Isle.

Thus I slipped into a sort of thermo-nuclear reverie;  
saw the shape of things to come and all the blunders that would be.

Saw the turbo-generators line the coast from Wash to Wales,  
pylons on the Dorset skyline striding up from Severn vales;

Dust of Strontium 90 dropping gently on the site beneath—  
Bradwell, Berkeley, Dartmouth, Dungeness, Winchelsea and Winfrid Heath.

Heard the sound of guided missiles whooshing round the central blue,  
Talos, Niké, Thor and all the inter-continental crew.

While an Afro-Asian frown would hold a fretful world in awe  
till the browned-off nations slumbered, numbed by universal jaw,  
and the war-heads throbbed no longer, for the pass was really sold  
by some Anglo-Scandinavian Hammarskjöld or Summerskjöld . . .

\* \* \* \* \*  
Then I woke and shouted loudly "Let the curtains round me fall  
ere I live to see the glories which emerge from Calder Hall!"

P. E. C.



### Road Map

THE motor industry is making a rapid recovery from its slump, and investors have not been slow to renew their confidence in every root, branch and ancillary of it. Signs of improvement are for all to see, hear and smell: road traffic has zoomed with very little regard for vestigial petrol rationing, and the garage man is once again practising those minor courtesies which are advertised so boldly on his Christmas calendar; short-time working in the car-bodies factories has disappeared and thousands of men labelled redundant a year ago are now back in overalls; the insurance companies have decided that they can afford to sting the motorist for about one-third more premium (from July 1); and lavish preparations are being made on the metric system to soak the motorist who manages to find somewhere to park his steed.

On the production front prospects are bright indeed. In March output rose by about eighteen per cent to 14,000 cars per week—which is better-than anything achieved over the last nine months. And exports, at 9,000 a week, are back at the record level of two years ago. Before 1957 expires it is quite possible that the peak export figures of 1955 will have been overtopped.

The most remarkable progress in exports has taken place in the United States market, where the continuing boom has made the old recovery slogan "two cars in every garage" something like a reality. All the major European car manufacturers have prospered from this new vitality—it coincides of course with the heavy trade in tranquillizers—among American importers, but Britain's share of the market, about 7,000 cars a month during the first quarter, is extremely good. Already this year Britain has sold more cars to the United

States than in 1955, and by June should have equalled the business done in 1956.

To some extent exports have flourished at the expense of home sales. Suez, petrol rationing, higher taxation and higher prices generally have all meant some abatement of the spring fever (swine fever?) to which road-hogs are susceptible. The early trade lost will take a lot of picking up and especially so if the weather reverts to the seasonal normal. All the same the industry will be disappointed if total output for the year fails to reach 800,000 cars.

The motorist's lot becomes more difficult with every crisis. Budget and move towards social and economic equality. He is now regarded, one feels, as a beast of fiscal burden, a camel of vertebral infangibility. Since 1947 he has been saddled with increases of one



### We Also Serve . . .

MAY is not a resurrection but an insurrection: a violent riot with bugles of yellow, bayonets of scarlet. This is the month when those of us who can see should weep for those who are blind. Beauty squirts into the air, the wistaria is mauve again, the laburnum gold, even the nettles give gladness with their clean greens. It is all a fountain of colour falling into a lake of petals. It's a pity that those of us who live in this fun-fair of blossom can hardly creep out to look at it. It's not that we don't want to but that we haven't the time. For the Season is upon us.

By Season I don't mean anything to do with agriculture: farmers have got all their seed in except their kale. They can sit back and rest till it's time to get their silage in. But for what used to be known as the gentry it is another matter. Our Season is upon us, and I don't refer to that social round which used to end at Goodwood, though some of us remember our more leisured days.

hundred per cent or more in the cost of tyres, petrol and insurance, with an additional 25 per cent of road tax and 60 per cent purchase tax. And the result is that his travel, all in, now costs him nearly ninepence a mile, compared with fourpence a mile in 1947.

There is, alas, no hope of more lenient treatment: until we have the roads needed for majority motoring our four million car-users will continue to be treated as a privileged minority.

One sign of the times for investors is the revival of interest in the car-body manufacturing business Pressed Steel. Its ordinary shares are now being closely examined for signs of renewed growth and its recent issue of 5½ per cent debentures is standing very happily at a handsome premium.

MAMMON

\* \* \*

We are now getting our clothes ready for our Season. They are not top-hats: mine is an apron, not even green baize.

The Englishman's home is now probably a guest-house; and if he does have the misfortune to own a castle it is almost certain to be a guest-house. Those of us who believed that we were educated for better things face a season of washing-up. The kitchen sink is our bower, we stink of detergents. Ex-Governors of Colonies now move into the box-room and spend their days polishing what is certainly not silver; colonels are brisk and busy with tea-trays, shuffling about obsequiously in slippers and cleaning their guests' plimsolls. Their wives are worrying about groceries, obtaining them wholesale and vaguely wondering just how many tins go to make an original sin. If there are children in our houses they have no prospect but a tent or a caravan in the garden, since their rooms can be let at ten guineas a week.

No, we haven't time for May, and June will see us squabbling over the tips, or as some people who are not as double-U as we are call them, gratuities.

It's odd that a nation which is so madly concerned with educating its young should not care a hoot what happens to its educated old. And some of us aren't so old either. We've got decades of servility in front of us.

RONALD DUNCAN

\* \* \*

### Dig those Hon. Cats

"I am grateful for the helpful way in which hon. Members have spoken in this debate."—Mr. Harold Watkinson, as quoted in *Hansard*



THE Bevan family came down on Monday prepared to rag the Foreign Secretary for having congratulated King Hussein of Jordan. Miss Jennie Lee got in first and complained that he had congratulated a man who had interfered with the democratic processes of his country. Mr. Bevan then followed it up by complaining that he had congratulated a man who had threatened to make war on Israel. But the Palestinian democrats whom the King had suppressed were far more bellicose than was ever the King himself. What was the poor Foreign Secretary to do? As Abraham Lincoln would have put it, you can please some of the Bevans all of the time or all of the Bevans some of the time, but it is very difficult to please all of the Bevans all of the time.

It is indeed, when it comes to that, very difficult to please all of the Socialists all of the time. Mr. J. P. W. Mallalieu thought that there was something rotten in the state of football—as indeed there is—and also thought that the Government should step in and put it to rights—which is more debatable. Manchester United plays in Dame Florence Horsbrugh's constituency. Are we to see her back on the Treasury Bench as Mistress of Football? But odder was Mr. Gordon Walker's supporting argument from the Front Opposition Bench. The proof that football was in a bad way, thought the Socialist leader, was that Mr. John Charles could earn only £15 a week in England, and if he wanted £60,000 he had to go to Italy to get it, but with the regrettable exception of a few Fascist

speculators like John Charles who in a spirit of no solidarity insist on playing harder than other people, surely the present organization of football is a very model of the Socialist Commonwealth. The players have risen above narrow loyalties to their particular team. They give their loyalty instead to the football workers at large. What right has John Charles to score more goals than any other player in League football, to kick the ball harder than underprivileged centre-forwards, like, say, Miss Margaret Herbison—for all the world as though he had never heard that there was a Shops Bill being debated in the House of Lords? And if he has left us for Italy

and left the field clear for those who are content with the rate for the job and equal kicks for all, what need is there for an inquiry? All footballers are equal, and if some footballers are more equal than others and have on occasion taken so much under the counter that some of the clubs have run out of counters, that only proves that we are not doctrinaire in our socialism.

Mr. Powell acts on the assumption—in which for all that we know he may be right—that no Members of Parliament can read. When he introduces a bill he explains every detail of it that is already in the printed page before Members. It does not make for lively fun, but at



least he cannot be accused of scamping his work. The debate that followed was unco-ordinated, as Finance Bill debates usually are, every Member airing the claims of his particular little toy, from Mr. McKibbin's trombone to Mr. Hugh Fraser's docks to take large tankers. The Suez Canal, Mr. Watkinson has discovered, "is not quite as essential to our economy as we had thought before the event." The question is, Who is "we"? But anyhow, if it is true that we shall soon do without the Canal and that it was jolly decent of Colonel Nasser to teach us as much by blocking it up for a bit, it seems to follow that Mr. Fraser is right and that there is no sense in having large tankers if we have not got any ports to put them in.

Mr. Thorneycroft made an elementary but sensible point when he came to wind up. He protested against the habit of saying that the Chancellor had "given" money to a taxpayer when he reduced his taxes. But the protest had no effect on Miss Herbison, who trotted out again the next day the old, old story that the Chancellor had "given £34 millions to the surtax payer." The Government, she said, was making "an attack on the standard of living of the people." But, if so, it is a singularly ineffective attack. Much that the Government has done may well be criticized. It may well be argued that our prosperity, though high, is precarious, but nobody can deny the fact that at the moment the people are consuming more goods than they have ever consumed before. In fact Miss Herbison's case was given away on the previous day by Mrs. Mann—Mrs. Mann is rather a dab at giving other people's cases away—when Mrs. Mann protested against the increased television licences. The people, she said, could barely afford their television sets. It was cruel to raise the cost of them. But a television set is the very test case of luxury. If they can afford one at all they cannot be so badly off, and it is insanity to say that people should be stood their false teeth in order that they may be able to afford their television sets.

The Shops Bill is the real issue of political thinking to-day. Lord Conesford, basing himself on the immortal principles of Burke, Beachcomber and Disraeli, pleaded nobly for the cause of liberty and supported Lord Grantchester's amendment that in a free

country a shop should not have to close an hour earlier if it did not want to. This, said Lord Hailsham, was a wrecking amendment and if it were passed it was doubtful whether it was worth while going on with the bill. So what? The constitutional doctrine is fascinating. If left to themselves the great majority of Lords would certainly be delighted that the bill should be dropped. Everyone understands that it is by now a convention of the constitution that only in exceptional circumstances are the Lords justified in rejecting a bill that has been passed by the Commons. But this is a bill that has never been before the Commons—a bill that there are abundant reasons to think that a majority of the Commons, left to its free opinion, greatly dislikes. It is not the Commons' bill at all, nor the people's bill. It is only the Government's bill. What is this new constitutional doctrine that the Lords are under obligation to be the mere rubber-stamp of the Government? If so, what is the purpose of them?

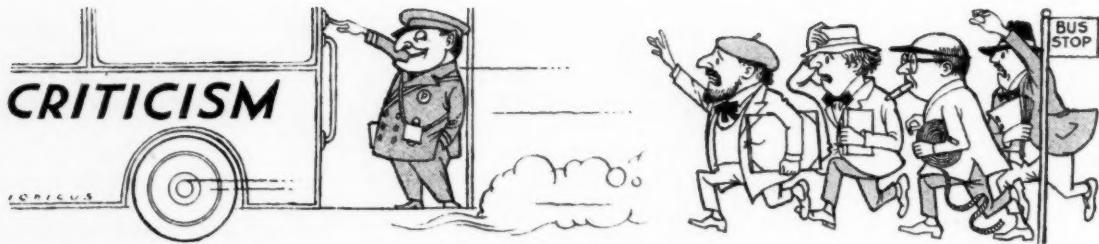
The next day the Lords turned to defence. Lord Mancroft was rather dull for the Government, and Lord Alexander was very dull for the Opposition. Lord Salisbury flitted to and fro more like a butterfly than a Marquis. Lord St. Oswald made an able maiden speech. There were rumours that The Earl was going to make a great oration which would reunite the Socialist Party, but he betrayed very little evidence that he

much cared whether the Socialist Party was reunited or not. He contented himself with saying that he would not be coming to-morrow and made a prim little joke about scientists' views which "changed as quickly as Ministers of Defence under a Conservative Government." Mr. Head was sitting on the steps of the throne and, as in obedience to a stage direction, Mr. Sandys slipped in to join him. Lord Cherwell assumed a scientist's privilege to rant like a demagogue on scientific matters. The decks were cleared for Lord Tedder on the next day.

On the Air Estimates in the Commons Colonel Wigg was hoping to see the day when defence was not treated as a party matter. Fair enough, but once again, if every matter of the smallest importance is to be treated as above party, one wonders what are party politicians for.

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS





## BOOKING OFFICE Dreaming of Spires

**N**O term of abuse has had as long a run as "Escapist," except perhaps its opposite, "Busy-body." As an Escapist myself I resent this. I believe, and it is about time Psychology believed too, that Life develops by alternately confronting and fleeing reality and that it is in Escaping that the imagination is nourished and the will restored.

It is better not to escape into a milieu that has to be lived up to, like Periclean Athens or Medicean Florence. It is also a mistake to escape into a past that stands squarely behind you. Once you begin living in your grandfather's world you begin drawing conclusions about your own world, and this is the reverse of escape. I find it is better to go back and, as it were, sideways. Quite a good dream-world is English Literary Society from, say, the period of Allingham's journal to that of Mr. Garnett's reminiscences. The writers of the time seemed to know all the other writers, and whether you are calling on Carlyle or Galsworthy you can be pretty certain that the leaders of the profession will be dropping in. Arnold Bennett's *Journals*, even the sad, smart-art final volume, can feed a number of reveries. The objection to this world is that it is so diffuse; one is always hopping about from Doughty Street to Surrey and then to Fitzroy Square and Garsington. There is a lot to be said for having a place as well as a period.

One gets one's first feeling for place from novels. To me the Hammersmith-Kensington area is *Sinister Street*; but not merely *Sinister Street*. Starting with fascination rather than attraction, I have added other aspects until the idea of South Kensington has become complicated enough for a refuge, though never a deep shelter. There is not enough literature to nourish my dreams. Chesterton bounced off and away. *Love and Mr. Lewisham* got the Science but not the Arts, and the key-phrase is Science and Art Department. The period starts, of course, with the Great Exhibition and it ends surprisingly long

ago. For me, South Kensington is Lost Causes still providing the secretary with occasional sketching holidays in Florence out of a dwindling Victorian legacy, loot from Indian palaces, the young Wells among the prehistoric monsters, lectures on non-ferrous metal-mining in the tropics, endless examining in drawing and sight-reading, the alternation of very sacred and only comparatively profane in the Albert Hall, vast galleries



of furniture and household ware and metalwork for the encouragement of craftsmanship among the rare visitors, a good deal of external terra-cotta and Beardsley's remark that the Brompton Oratory was the only place in London where you could forget it was Sunday. However, all this variety has produced little in the way of diaries and letters and fiction, and Escapism needs not walks abroad but books at home.

Nineteenth-century Oxford from the first stirrings of Reform in Oriel down to the crash of the Teutonic idol in 1914 is my most reliable Escape. *Sinister Street* covers Oxford too, but its Oxford seems less lifelike to me, probably because my Oxford belongs to students

and clergymen rather than to bloods. There is room in it for *Jude the Obscure* and L. R. Farnell, but not for Rosebery. At present (escape should have its soupçon of guilt) I tend to dally with gossipy things like Mrs. Jeune's diary, rather than with important things like T. H. Green's influence on Imperialism.

Oxford made only a few of the great Victorians; but it provides a good listening-post for the Victorian world. Indeed, if you are not firm you may find yourself switched from rows over the building of the Museum and anecdotes of fussy celibates into less comic topics like social service in East London. For all the port and the scholarship and the relish for intrigue, for all the excitement over Ritualism and Pre-Raphaelitism and Compulsory Greek, there was discomfort as well as zest in Oxford. There was the bitterness of overdue promotion in an age that worshipped visible success. There was the threat to comfortable childhood beliefs from geology at the beginning of the period and anthropology at the end. There was the nagging Victorian conscience and the nagging Victorian snobbery and the scratch, scratch of clever men on one another.

How much happier I am reading Mark Pattison's *Memoirs* than Mark Pattison seems to have been. As it stretches ahead of me the literature seems inexhaustible, at least read as casually and intermittently as I propose to read it. There is the fascination of constantly altering one's stance: first Mrs. A. L. Smith's life of her husband, then G. B. Grundy's account of how the Army coach became a teacher of Greek History, then *Echoes from the Oxford Magazine*. There is something to be said for beginning, as I suppose I did, with the Manning in *Eminent Victorians* and going on to the last volume of Sir Charles Mallet's History of the University. Perhaps as good a jumping-off point is *The New Republic* (together with Mallock's *Memoirs of Life and Literature*). I read it first before I realized that all the conversations were really about Oxford.

I suppose the young have twenty or so more years of the past to choose from,

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blast them. They can wallow in quite extraordinary milieus, the Neville Chamberlain circle or the *New Country* circle, or even war-time Leeds. Give me Jowett!

R. G. G. PRICE

**Escape and Be Secret.** Charles Gibbs-Smith. Heinemann, 15/-

The latter-day-Oppenheim approach to the suspense-spy-story, of which Mr. Ian Fleming is the principal exponent, marks a reaction against the method employed by Graham Greene, Eric Ambler, and their countless imitators: luxurious surroundings and—in the case of Mr. Gibbs-Smith—a leisurely "literate" style are becoming once again *de rigueur*. Here the narrator—psychiatrist Paul Harvard, "consultant to one of the Intelligence Services"—lives in a "penthouse" on top of the "Portchester" overlooking Hyde Park; reads Sir Thomas Browne; and has a "modest" collection of Italian works of art. "Operation Rudolf"—restoring the mental health of an Austrian scientist, "one of the most brilliant rocket and guided-missile men among the younger generation"—takes him first to Vienna ("You will stay at Sacher's"); then to Salzburg and the Schloss Hotel at Hallstatt, ending with "two automatics, one in a live hand, one in a dead, with a wisp of blue smoke curling away from each." To satisfy prospective film-producers, Harvard is provided with "American ancestry and upbringing," also a slight transatlantic accent.

J. M-R.

**Proust's Way.** Georges Piroué. Heinemann, 15/-

Critical books on Proust continue unabated. M. Georges Piroué (excellently translated by Mr. Gerard Hopkins) adds some useful comments to the pile. He devotes himself solely to an examination of the narrative of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, pointing out such things as the fact that "though bathed in the atmosphere of childhood, it is a book without children." The trouble about this very close criticism is that it inevitably leads to picking holes for the sake of picking them; there is no way of avoiding that. The result is almost a form of grumbling at Proust for writing the book at all. After all, if he had written an optimistic book—as so many of his critics seem to wish—would it have been so enjoyable? M. Piroué demonstrates with great truth that its theme not only shows that the imagination cannot elaborate an agreed belief, but also, where an agreed belief exists, the imagination vitiates it. All the same, many will continue to read *A la Recherche* with unalloyed pleasure, however melancholy its conclusions.

A. P.

**Waterloo to Peterloo.** R. J. White. Heinemann, 18/-

This short study by a Cambridge historian tries to combine a readable

narrative of the riots and repressions of the time, built round the Derbyshire Rising, with a rather complex historical argument. Compression occasionally makes the story flag and the thesis obscure. However, as one works into it the author's aims become clearer and the considerable merits of the book take grip.

Mr. White sees muddle where his predecessors have seen organized malignity. Sidmouth's spy system was as casually incompetent as Orator Hunt's programme-making. Mr. White neatly describes the social atmosphere as "suspended revolution," and he is convincing on the persistence of the political reform movement of the previous century into and through the confused violence of economic protest during the Regency. He does not look ahead to show the extent to which the memory of the risings of 1816-18 helped to force the Reform Bill through, nor does he investigate the influence of the dissenting congregations, whether in retarding or in organizing working-class demands.

R. G. G. P.

**The Ram in the Thicket.** Anthony Glynn. Hutchinson, 15/-

Presumably, the original ram in the thicket (though not given choice of destiny, and, mercifully, unable to bloat in words about its condition) was as unwilling a sacrifice as is Hugo, the hero of Anthony Glynn's novel. The young man is torn between his longing to write and his duty towards his wife and twins. The wife has auburn hair and "chocolate eyes" which he seems to like except when he prefers the broad shoulders of a Scottish-Chinese girl. The story begins in the West Indies, where Hugo represents his uncle's firm, and continues in London. The characters of the mother and the abominable uncle, his directors and office staff are amusingly drawn. It is easier to sympathize with the twisting relation than with a man who could say to his wife "Of course most of the estate wives would have taken off their clothes and rolled at my feet if I'd winked" and a wife who could show such broadminded and revolting curiosity about the details of her husband's *affaire* as does the chocolate-eyed Diana. The love scenes repel, and I fancy that a good many readers will weary before the young couple "make good" at the end.

B. E. B.



### AT THE PLAY

*Restless Heart* (ST. JAMES'S)  
*The Best Damn Lie*  
(WINTER GARDEN)

M. ANOUILH's latest (actually one of his earliest) is shaky in construction, improbable in plot, disagreeable in detail and, naturally, stale in theme. Its justification is in its occasional flashes of sheer dramatic



"No, it can't be—the Mayflower couldn't be off course as much as this."

virtuosity, much vigorous comic invention and one major performance, that of Mr. Donald Pleasence, which is worth the money alone.

Broadly, it nags away at that contentious old bone, the social incompatibility of poor and rich; for the poor, Thérèse, a prototype Anouilh waif of foul and vicious unbringing, fiddling atrociously in her atrocious parents' wretched little café orchestra; for the rich, Florent, a saintly and stupid pianist of national eminence, scion of an ancient house. This is sheer *Tilly of Bloomsbury*. But Anouilh makes his Tilly, or Thérèse, an intense little masochist out to parade, not conceal, the broker's men and the holes in the furniture, inviting into her prospective husband's serene and cultured environment all the defiling images of her past, seeking perversely to crack the armour of his (quite inoffensive) complacency. She wrings his tears, and sees in them her absolution. Here are scenes of sickening ugliness, excessive to point a moral or adorn a tale; and at their close the author is bogged down in a familiar dramatic quandary, the need to write a third act when he has said all he has to say already. The result is little more than a postscript for postscript's sake.

But so to dismiss *Restless Heart* is to do it less than justice. True theatre keeps breaking in. The squalor of the café scenes, as the degraded musicians squabble over their scores; the spare, sure strokes sketching the tyranny of their employer; the shock of contrast between this and Florent's easy gliding on the polished surface of upper-class

existence; the continuous mastery which imposes credibility on the inconceivable in character and situation. All shows that Anouilh twenty-three years ago was bound to grow to Anouilh of to-day.

Mr. Donald Pleasence's abhorrent orchestra-leader, whether lording it forcibly-feebly on the bandstand, or shambling in unspeakable trousers as a high-life parasite, is a great work of art. Betty Warren, bursting distastefully out of her tight, black bombazine, makes his wife a horror of raddled worthlessness. Miss Zetterling has a spirited shot at Thérèse, handicapped by the intransigencies of the part (we pray that someone will whip her, when the author only means her to stir our pity) and by her own tricks of performance—the eccentric, doled-out emphases, the familiar gasp of laughter, the pouts and dimples and stretchings. Directing, Mr. William Chappell neatly clarifies the erratic material, and Mr. John Hotchkiss has composed some suitably wild, fine swirlings to serve as Florent's pianoforte compositions played off stage during almost all the last act.

J. B. BOOTHROYD

In *The Best Damn Lie* Leo Marks has set himself the impossible task of

writing two entirely different plays in one; a murder drama and treatise on the well-known difficulties of attaining world peace. His shaky bridge between these irreconcilables is an earnest American scientist who brings his electronic lie-detector to London to clear up the murder of his daughter at a fellow-travelling embassy during an international reception. She has been strangled in the bedroom of a potentate from behind the Iron Curtain, who is engaged in top-level talks with his British and American counterparts—talks said to be on the verge of a better understanding.

At this delicate moment the last thing wanted by the Foreign Office is a zealous hunter after explosive truths; but improbably protocol is swept aside, and the scientist and his magic suitcase come for a week-end to Chequers, as it were, where the Big Three are relaxing in prickly amity. There the murderer is discovered, but not before the lie-detector has caused a second murder; and the scientist, with the incorrigible innocence of his kind, has harangued the cringing statesmen in Sunday School terms on the wickedness of double dealing. At the end he makes his own personal contribution to peace in a

theatrical stroke which left me not very much more hopeful.

It is an odd mixture, of far too many ingredients, of straight drama and rather woolly sentiment. The more throbbing moments are even emphasized by a rose spotlight. We cannot be kidded into swallowing either the statesmen themselves or their unnatural patience with the intruder. And yet, in spite of all this, the evening has moments of genuine tension which suggest that if Mr. Marks had set his sights lower and been content with a simpler treatment he might have written an effective play. Trick machinery is awkward stage stuff, but his handling of the lie-detector is adroit.

No cast could quite persuade us into belief, but often this one nearly succeeds. Walter Fitzgerald, at the iron corner of the triangle, is particularly good as a ripe old political acrobat. Hugh Wakefield's comic asperity may be a little professional for the Foreign Office but it remains consistent. I kept wondering why the scientist should pray so feelingly for the gift of fairness if his machine in fact did what he claimed; this is the kind of difficulty Stephen Murray is up against, and on the whole surmounts. Sonia Dresdel puts considerable bite into an assignment on the edge of melodrama.

ERIC KEOWN

#### Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

*At the Drop of a Hat* (Fortune—16/1/57), a two-man evening of wit. *The Chalk Garden* (Haymarket—25/4/56), a good play with Edith Evans. A later, better and funnier Anouilh, *The Waltz of the Toreadors* (Criterion—14/3/56).

## AT THE GALLERY

*Derain*, Wildenstein Gallery, New Bond Street, Closes end of May

*Bellotto*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, Closes end of May

*Duncan Grant*, Leicester Galleries, Closes May 23

 *Guggenheim Collection*, Tate Gallery, Closes May 26

THE Derain exhibition should be seen and judged by all whose interest in painting is wider than the latest "ist" or "ism," and by those who have grasped the fact that likenesses—even good ones—of faces or landscapes do not constitute the whole of pictorial art. Derain was an odd man out. Originally an innovator with Matisse, Braque and Picasso, and ranked with them, after a time for several reasons he lost in reputation. He returned to normal perspective, which Picasso and Braque had largely discarded, so that his pictures lack a certain mystifying quality which intrigues the modern world; and after an initial burst of brightness he used sober and restrained colour when Matisse and later Dufy, on the heels of Van Gogh, had established a vogue for bright colours. Besides, unlike Utrillo with his street



Monsieur Tarde—DONALD PLEASANCE

Thérèse Tarde—MAI ZETTERLING

(Restless Heart)

scenes, he varied his subject matter considerably. In addition he was inclined to revive the styles of past painters such as Courbet and Corot and many others. This brought the charge of lack of originality. What I find right and admirable about Derain is the vigour, wit, and delicacy which he brings to his task, and the failure to be intimidated by the charm of his subjects, especially in his landscapes of Provence, to me his happiest pictures.

If the prerequisite of being a good painter resides in being totally unlike any past painter, as the critics of Derain insist, then we must presumably condemn the lovely pictures of 18th-century Warsaw by Bellotto, since they show a very strong influence of his uncle Canaletto, whose pupil he was.

Among contemporaries Duncan Grant too is a studious painter, who has looked at several French masters at times without losing his integrity or vitality. His present one-man show contains much evidence to that effect.

Those in need of something totally new will probably seek it in the Guggenheim Collection, where they may find that an amiable countryman by Cézanne, a Bonnard interior and a very smart large Picasso are the main outstanding rocks in a rather vague swirl.

ADRIAN DAINTREY

## AT THE PICTURES

*The Curse of Frankenstein*  
Amateur Films

WHEN the only new feature film Press-shown in a week is a new colour version of *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Director: Terence Fisher), it is asking for trouble. At the best of times, a "horror" film with an X certificate is not approached by either public or critics in a very serious frame of mind: the audience is full of giggles from the very beginning, partly because of nervousness but mainly to show everybody that it isn't in the least nervous, and the critics are in honour bound not to take a "horror" film seriously anyway. It is usual for them, when they notice one at all, to give it a ribald paragraph towards the end of the article, relaxing (after dealing with more important and valuable works) and treating it as if it had intentionally been made as comic as it often manages to seem.

This time, there is no choice; there isn't another new London film to write about. But as it happens, this one does honestly deserve more serious consideration. It is a straightforward, conscientious version of the original Mary Shelley novel, and though the advertisements and other publicity emphasize its horrific qualities as if the obvious *frisson* were all anyone could hope or expect to get from it, the film-makers deserve quite a bit of credit for their trouble in giving it virtues considerably higher in the aesthetic scale.



[*The Curse of Frankenstein*

*The Creature*—CHRISTOPHER LEE

I'm not suggesting that it is to be regarded as an important work of art; after all, it stands to reason that the thing would never have been made at all but for the thought of those members of the public who really want the kind of simple, almost physical shock a "horror" film can give them. Nevertheless it is well done, as a period melodrama. The sensational moments are presented not crudely but with a macabre fancy, and the details of Frankenstein's laboratory, including the immensely intricate apparatus with which he galvanizes dead bodies into life, are made oddly picturesque (the film is in Eastman Colour).

The "creature" (Christopher Lee) is unlike any previous film monsters; I gather that they had to be careful about this because of copyright, which extends even to the word "monster" itself. There is a strange, horrible pathos about this shambling human jigsaw fitted together by Frankenstein (Peter Cushing) from fragments with which he has stocked up at the Municipal Charnel House... There, you observe the facetious tone begins to creep in despite all my good resolutions. Perhaps I had better say no more about the picture. It is not the sort of thing I personally enjoy; in the ordinary way it would never occur to me to go and see a work like this. Yet it is, of its kind, unusually well done.

As I say, there was no other feature film this time, but we were shown an interesting programme of amateur short films—eight of the prizewinners in the *Amateur Cine World's "Ten Best of the Year"* competition. By the time these

words appear they will no longer be showing at the National Film Theatre, but film societies and cine clubs can hire them (the British Film Institute distributes).

The most successful of those we saw—it drew loud applause—was a brief cartoon, *Short Spell*, made by S. Wynn Jones without a camera: images and sound track were drawn on clear film, in the way originated by Norman McLaren. It is simply an alphabet, in which each letter turns with acrobatic sinuosity into a drawing of something it stands for, which in turn similarly becomes the next letter, to a comic, more or less percussive sound accompaniment. This is ingeniously funny.

Another success was the most ambitious—*Down to Earth*, a fantastic little school story made by King's College School Film Unit. Simple fun, but we laughed at it genuinely, without any thought of making allowances for the shortcomings of amateurs.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Survey**  
(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Several I would like to recommend have now left London, but you can still find the intensely enjoyable musical *Funny Face* (8/5/57) and the diversely excellent Academy programme, which includes with the documentary *The Lost Continent* (24/4/57) the touching, amusing schoolboy story *Friends for Life*.

Not one of the releases was noticed here. *Time Without Pity* is quite an effective suspense piece, *Folies Bergère* has spectacle and some good singing.

RICHARD MALLETT



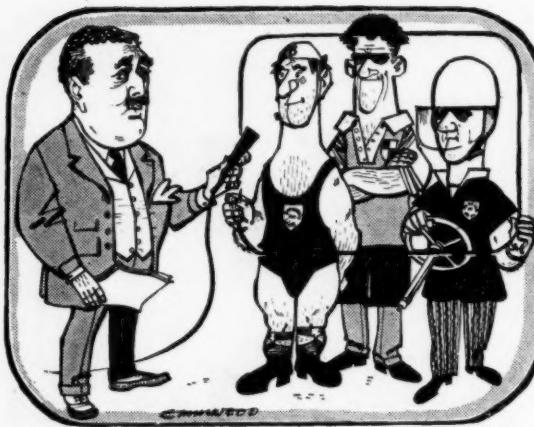
## ON THE AIR Calling All Sportsmen

THERE were two delightful moments of unrehearsed humour during my latest week of viewing. Peter West, compère of the final round of the glamorous "Miss England, 1957" show, paraded his gowned, tooth-paste-ad. and pulchritudinous beauties and then instructed them with avuncular bonhomie to put on their swimsuits. Then some odious imp of science stepped in and caused a technical hitch. It was not a long breakdown, just enough to allow the screening of the "Normal service will be resumed . . ." notice, and the hiatus was brilliantly effective. I gather that the B.B.C. was swamped by telephone calls from irate and tired business men.

The second surprise occurred when a fatuous announcer became tongue-tied over the introduction to a dreary western and credited Al Somebody-or-Other with the production and Pete Quelquechose with the horseplay.

It isn't often that one gets two laughs in a week.

"Sportsview," after acquitted itself admirably at the Cup Final and the subsequent inquest, has gone into hiding for a few weeks, and this seems a suitable moment to turn the glasses on Peter Dimmock and his muscular henchmen. On the whole the B.B.C. sports units, sound and vision, do a pretty good job. They deliver a fair ration of commentary and gossip and make quite certain that images of Stirling Moss, Pat Smythe, the Bedser twins, Joe Davis and Henry Cotton do not fade from the sportsmen's retina.



[Sportsview]

PETER DIMMOCK

My chief criticism of "Sportsview," however, is not related to the frequency with which a handful of confident, telegenic stars are paraded before the cameras; it concerns the growing tendency of the programme to confuse sport with show business. Sport in the cheaper popular section of the Press means little more than results, forecasts and the exposure of real, imaginary and fabricated scandals: it very seldom means constructive comment and analysis of play. And I often feel that "Sportsview," in pursuit of maximum viewing figures, works hand in glove with the scandal-mongers. If correspondent Wheat Pilson staggers his readers by suggesting that the Rovers' forwards smoke marijuana at half-time, that Sledge Smith was bribed to lie down in the second round, or that Surrey's opening batsmen are using abrasive wrapping on their bats to take the shine off the new ball, then the chances are that the Rovers' forwards,

Sledge Smith, the Surrey openers and of course Wheat Pilson will appear in the next edition of "Sportsview."

This kind of thing is acceptable no doubt to the older generation, to armchair sloggers and the hooligans of the terraces, but I am quite sure that the younger set, our up-and-coming athletes and gamesters, find it dull and degrading. Television has the opportunity to raise the standard of sports and sports-talk in Britain, and it isn't using it to the full.

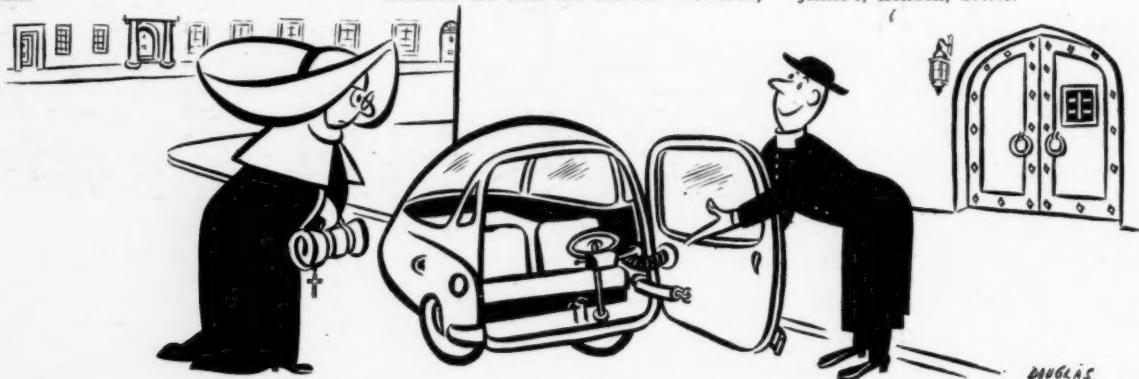
Another criticism of "Sportsview" is that it adopts gimmicks too readily. Sportsmen and sportswomen should not be expected to change into shorts, flannels, bathing-costumes or tracksuits unless they are performing before the

cameras; racing drivers should not be expected to sit in stationary cars and "drive" against a back-projected film; and athletes should never be dragged in front of the microphone while they are still short of breath to explain how they have just broken the record.

Christopher Chataway's little series "Half the World Away," in which we have been afforded a glimpse of India, Hong-Kong and Singapore and intelligent chats on the problems and aspirations of the undergraduate generation made admirable television. Chataway is a splendid middle-distance interviewer and in these programmes he was supported very skilfully by Stephen Hearst and cameraman Peter Hamilton.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

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